

*In the Beginning,
Elohim*

BETTY BURTON CHOATE

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Dedication

To all those in my life who have encouraged and deepened my love for God, especially my parents, Clyde and Theola Burton, and to my precious husband, J.C. Choate whose presence in my world made it what it is today, even though he has now been in Paradise for more than a decade.

To my children and grandchildren, Darla, Sheila, Steve, and Brad; Stephanie, Alex, Erin, Jonathan, Savannah, Seth, and Arwen; Riley and Jack who continue to be a great help and inspiration to me in these later years. My prayer is that all of us will be faithful to God and that we can spend eternity together with Him when this earthly life is over.

Publisher's Statement

A number of years ago I wrote a study that is most precious to me: **Jesus Christ the Eternal Sacrifice**. During his years of speaking on the radio in India, J.C. did a series of lessons on **The Holy Spirit**. I took his manuscripts, deleted the program introductions and conclusions, and we have printed it in book form. **In the Beginning, Elohim** completes the study on the Three of the Godhead, and I am very thankful to be able to offer it now.

As with the years of study on the sacrifice of Christ, the examination of Scriptures that inform us about the Lord of Hosts, the Deity who became the Father of Christ, and Our Father, has been precious and enlightening to me.

Since no mortal knows God as an entity, I have let His wording in Scripture provide much of the text for the lessons on God, Who became the Father, and on the Holy Spirit. I hope you will read them as His words to you, explaining Himself to you in words that humans can understand, to the degree that mortals can understand the Spirit world. Please don't just skim over them as "often read passages", but let them register in your mind as new insight into the entity, the personality, the behavior, and the eternity of the God we serve.

Please Note: Italics in Scripture references are for *emphasis*, not indicating that those words are not in the original language.

Betty Burton Choate
July 21, 2018

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In the Beginning, Elohim

Chapter One

If I suddenly woke up on an island all alone, with no knowledge of anything or anyone else except myself, and with no knowledge of the past and no experience of life, my mind would be a blank. Who am I? What am I? Where did I come from? What is this place all around me? Is there a past? Is there a future? What would that future hold?

In such a case, what a bewildering, horrifying thing existence would be!

The glorious fact is that we have not been placed in such a knowledge-less vacuum. We have a true record that supplies all of these answers, and any others that would trouble our minds. That record is called the “Bible”. It opens with the profound statement, **“In the beginning, God [Elohim, the plural form of the word]...”**

No, the first verse of Genesis is not speaking of *God’s* beginning but of the beginning of the measuring of time and of His work within what can only be a moment of eternity. What does the record tell us about this great creative power? Who is He? What is He? How does He relate to us — or, more accurately — how do we relate to Him?

How does the inspired record define God?

“God is Spirit...” (John 4:24). These words say that God is “spirit”. In Luke 24:39, the contrast is made between “spirit” and the physical body of humans: **“Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have.”**

We find extreme contrasts in Scripture regarding humans in their approach to God. When Moses led the children of Israel to Mount Sinai, they were to present themselves to Elohim, to receive His covenant:

“And Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain, saying, ‘Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel: “You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’

wings and brought you to Myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel.’

“So Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before them all these words which the Lord commanded him. Then all the people answered together and said, ‘All that the Lord has spoken we will do.’ So Moses brought back the words of the people to the Lord.

“And the Lord said to Moses, ‘Behold, I come to you in the thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and believe you forever....’

... “Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes. And let them be ready for the third day. For on the third day the Lord will come down upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. You shall set bounds for the people all around, saying, “Take heed to yourselves that you do not go up to the mountain or touch its base. Whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death. Not a hand shall touch him, but he shall surely be stoned or shot with an arrow; whether man or beast, he shall not live.” When the trumpet sounds long, they shall come near the mountain.’

“Then Moses went down from the mountain to the people and sanctified the people, and they washed their clothes. And he said to the people, ‘Be ready for the third day; do not come near your wives.’

“Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the trumpet was very loud, so that **all the people who were in the camp trembled....**

“Now all the people witnessed the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood afar off. Then they said to Moses, ‘You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, **lest we die.**’

“And Moses said to the people, ‘Do not fear; for God has come to test you, and that **His fear may be before you, so that you may not sin.**’ So the people stood afar off, but Moses drew near the thick darkness where God was.” (Exodus 19:3-16; 20:18-21).

Not only in this passage but in many other places, God very specifically required that those who would come into His presence make careful preparation concerning the cleanliness of their bodies and their clothes. He said in Leviticus 10:3: **“By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; And before all the people I must be glorified.”**

The greatness of God has not changed. No, He doesn’t specify exactly what we are to wear when we approach Him, but we would do well to remember

that if we presume to come into His presence, *our demeanor and appearance must show the respect due Him*. Is He glorified when we wear clothing appropriate for a ball game? Is He honored when more of our thinking is centered on something we have done or intend to do than on the fact that we are in the presence of the Elohim of the universe?

In contrast to the overwhelming fear of the Israelites as they came into the Lord's presence, God speaks in Hebrews 12:18-29 concerning the worship experience of the Christian:

"For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, so that those who heard it begged that the word should not be spoken to them anymore. (For they could not endure what was commanded: 'And if so much as a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned or shot with an arrow.' And so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, 'I am exceedingly afraid and trembling.')

"But you have come

(1) to Mount Zion and

(2) to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem,

(3) to an innumerable company of angels,

(4) to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven,

(5) to God the Judge of all,

(6) to the spirits of just men made perfect,

(7) to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant,

(8) and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.

"See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven, whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, 'Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven.' Now this, 'Yet once more,' indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain.

"Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire."

Let us, as Christians, be careful to hold God in the highest honor in our hearts, and be sure that our dress and behavior radiate that reverence for Him.



Human eyes cannot actually see “spirit”, but a manifestation of the appearance of God was allowed the prophet Ezekiel and was described by him in 1:26-28:

“And above the firmament ... was the likeness of a throne, in appearance like a sapphire stone; on the likeness of the throne was a likeness with the appearance of a man high above it. Also from the appearance of His waist and upward I saw, as it were, the color of amber with the appearance of fire all around within it; and from the appearance of His waist and downward I saw, as it were, the appearance of fire with brightness all around. Like the appearance of a rainbow in a cloud on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the brightness all around it. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord.”

Since, as humans, we cannot know God from a visual recognition, we must know Him through revelation and relationship: **through His revelation of Himself in Scripture, and our relationship that comes into existence through our birth into His spiritual family as His children.**

The God that we see in Scripture is “Elohim”, the triune Godhead: **the Lord of Hosts, the Word, and the Holy Spirit.** This first chapter of our study explores what the Scriptures say about “the Lord of Hosts”. The next two chapters deal with the Word and the Holy Spirit, while the following chapter explores what the Scriptures say about the nature of Elohim.



The first Person of the Godhead seems to be referred to as **“the Lord of Hosts”** much of the time in the Old Testament. “Jehovah” is the name used of Elohim also, primarily in the Old Testament, and in some cases it is difficult to determine if the reference is to the One who became “the Father” or to the one who became “the Son”, or to the three persons of the Godhead. In the New Testament, “the Lord of Hosts” is most often designated as “the Father” or “God”.

As we will see in Chapter 2, it seems that from before the creation actually began, **the Word** was the One who would become the sacrifice for the sins of the world (Revelation 13:8). As part of that role, the New Testament portrays Him as *the Mediator between God and man*. From the Old Testament record, which identifies Him with “the Angel [Messenger] of the Lord”, we would conclude that He served in the role of Mediator between Elohim and humanity from the time of the fall, during the Patriarchal Age, the Mosaic Age, and now in the Christian Age.

Jesus promised the Apostles that after His return to Heaven, they would receive **the Holy Spirit**. He would direct them in the completion of Jesus’ work of redemption as they would bring the message of the Gospel to the world. Beyond the Spirit’s work with the Apostles, we read repeatedly of His work in the life of each Christian as He was promised to indwell the obedient (Romans 8:9-11).

In Genesis 1:27 a very important statement is made: **“So God [Elohim] created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”** Man, with his limited capability can never fully comprehend the magnitude of the “Creator”. Yet, this Eternal Being, this holy and most supreme Spirit, this God, has taken the trouble to reveal Himself and His mind to us through the wonders of His Word, through life, nature, and the Universe, itself. Truly, the more we think on the greatness, the incomprehensibility of God, the more we sink into silent awe in His presence.

But He has revealed Himself also in a very personal way. As the passage informs us, we humans were created *in God’s image!* What does that mean? Simply, that every human characteristic is a miniature rendering of the very nature of God! Can humans love? Yes, to such a great extent that sometimes the entirety of our minds and emotions seem saturated with that commitment. While the love I feel may seem to dominate my whole human capacity, I must remember that even as I am a miniscule fraction of the magnitude of God, just so my ability to love is only a miniscule fraction of the love He feels!

This comparison is true of every aspect of the nature of God. We are very small copies of His greatness, but having those emotions embedded in myself enables me to “know” the nature of the God who made me.



Please read the following Scriptures carefully, realizing that they are inspired by God, describing Him in words that we can understand.

“O Lord of hosts, God of Israel, that dwellest between the cherubims, Thou art the God, even Thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth: Thou hast made heaven and earth” (Isaiah 37:16).

“For, lo, He that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is His thought, that maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth, the Lord, the God of hosts, is His name” (Amos 4:13).

“And one cried unto another, and said, ‘Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory...’” (Isaiah 6:3).

“The Lord of hosts hath sworn, saying, ‘Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand ... For the Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? And His hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?’” (Isaiah 14:24,27).

“... and he said: ‘Lord God of Israel, there is no God in heaven above or on earth below like You, who keep Your covenant and mercy with Your servants who walk before You with all their hearts’” (1 Kings 8:23).

“But You, O Lord, are a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in mercy and truth” (Psalm 86:15).

[God Will Be Gracious] “Therefore **the Lord** will wait, that He may be gracious to you; And therefore He will be exalted, that He may have mercy on you. For the Lord is a God of justice; Blessed are all those who wait for Him” (Isaiah 30:18).

“Yet they seek Me daily, and delight to know My ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and did not forsake the ordinance of their **God**. They ask of Me the ordinances of justice; They take delight in approaching God” (Isaiah 58:2).

“But **the Lord of hosts** shall be exalted in judgment, and **God** that is holy shall be sanctified in righteousness” (Isaiah 5:16).

Note, also, God’s commands to those who would look to Him for help:

“Thus saith **the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel**, ‘Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place’” (Jeremiah 7:3).

“Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live: and so **the Lord, the God of hosts**, shall be with you, as ye have spoken” (Amos 5:14).

“Therefore say thou unto them, ‘Thus saith **the Lord of hosts**; Turn ye unto Me,’ saith **the Lord of hosts**, ‘and I will turn unto you,’ saith **the Lord of hosts**” (Zechariah 1:3).

“And many nations shall be joined to **the Lord** in that day, and shall be my people: and I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that **the Lord of hosts** hath sent **Me** unto thee’ (Zechariah 2:11).



God, as identified in the New Testament

“But to us there is but **one God, the Father**, of Whom are all things, and we in Him; and one **Lord Jesus Christ**, by whom are all things, and we by him” (1 Corinthians 8:6).

“But **Jesus** answered them, ‘**My Father** has been working until now, and I have been working.’” (John 5:17).

“**Jesus** said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the **Father** except through Me.’” (John 14:6).

“Jesus answered and said unto him, ‘If a man love me, he will keep My words: and **My Father** will love him, and We will come unto him, and make **Our** abode with him’” (John 14:23).

“So He said to them, “When you pray, say: ‘Our **Father** in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.’” (Luke 11:2).

“For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the **Spirit** of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, **Father**.’” (Romans 8:15).

“... that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the **God and Father** of our **Lord Jesus Christ**.” (Romans 15:6).

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your **Father** in heaven. ... that you may be sons of your **Father** in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matthew 5:16, 45).

“**The God of Abraham**, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, **the God of our fathers**, hath glorified **His Son Jesus**; whom ye delivered up, and denied Him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go” (Acts 3:13).

“For you are all sons of **God** through faith in **Christ Jesus**” (Galatians 3:26).

“Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of **God** through **Christ**” (Galatians 4:7).

“Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of **God**” (Ephesians 2:19).

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of **the Father**, and of **the Son**, and of **the Holy Ghost**...” (Matthew 28:19).

“...that is, that **God** was in **Christ** reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors **for Christ**, as though **God** were pleading through us: we implore you on **Christ's** behalf, be reconciled to **God**. For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of **God** in Him” (2 Corinthians 5:19-21).

“In **My Father's** house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you” (John 14:2).

“Blessed be **the God** and **Father** of our **Lord Jesus Christ**, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in **Christ**” (Ephesians 1:3).

“Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of **God** leads you to repentance?” (Romans 2:4).

“And what agreement has the temple of **God** with idols? For you are the temple of the living **God**. As **God** has said: ‘I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their **God**, And they shall be My people’” (2 Corinthians 6:16).

“Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of **God**” (2 Corinthians 7:1).

“And **God** is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work” (2 Corinthians 9:8).

“Now thanks be to **God** who always leads us in triumph in **Christ**, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place” (2 Corinthians 2:14).

“... and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in **God** who created all things through **Jesus Christ**; to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of **God** might be made

known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 3:9,10).

“... **one God** and **Father** of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” (Ephesians 4:6).

“and that you put on the new man which was created according to **God**, in true righteousness and holiness” (Ephesians 4:24).

“Therefore take up the whole armor of **God**, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand” (Ephesians 6:13).

“... that you may become blameless and harmless, children of **God** without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world” (Philippians 2:15).

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to **God**; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through **Christ Jesus**” (Philippians 4:6,7).

“... that you may walk worthy of the **Lord**, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of **God**...” (Colossians 1:10).

“... that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of **God**, both of **the Father** and of **Christ**...” (Colossians 2:2).

“And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of **the Lord Jesus**, giving thanks to **God the Father** through Him” (Colossians 3:17).

“Because of these things the wrath of **God** is coming upon the sons of disobedience...” (Colossians 2:2).

“... who formerly were disobedient, when the longsuffering of **God** waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water” (1 Peter 3:20).

“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living **God**” (Hebrews 10:31).

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of **God**, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16,17).

“Nevertheless the solid foundation of **God** stands, having this seal: ‘**The Lord** knows those who are His,’ and, ‘Let everyone who names the name of **Christ** depart from iniquity’” (2 Timothy 2:19).

“Thus **God**, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for **God** to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us” (Hebrews 6:17,18).

“But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to

God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6).

“If you endure chastening, **God** deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?” (Hebrews 12:7).

“Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve **God** acceptably with reverence and godly fear” (Hebrews 12:28).

“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of **God**, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him” (James 1:5).

“Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which **the Lord** has promised to those who love Him” (James 1:12).

“Draw near to **God** and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded” (James 4:8).

“...you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to **God** through **Jesus Christ**” (1 Peter 2:5).

“The grace of **the Lord Jesus Christ**, and **the love of God**, and **the communion of the Holy Spirit** be with you all. Amen” (2 Corinthians 13:14).



Through referring to these many passages of Scripture, we understand that God has been speaking for Himself. Did we notice, though, that much of His definition of Himself is shown by delineating what *we must become* if we want to live in that heavenly realm eternally? He expects us to conform to His image of righteousness, and then He clearly explains in His inspired word what is promised to both the righteous and the disobedient after the judgment.

Let us listen!

Ah — Betty, Betty!

Here you are
Clamoring at My feet again,
Pleading and crying
Like an orphaned beggar
Will you never learn
To come as a daughter
Who knows she's loved
And who trusts her Father
To hear her
And to be moved by His love?

Come,
Sit here in My arms
And tell Me again
I know they are your children
And you hurt when they hurt
And you think you know what they need —
Here, let Me wipe your eyes:
They're smudging from the tears
Now, don't you remember, little girl,
That I told you
The last time you came begging so piteously
That they are *My* children too...
No, *My* children, first, before they are yours,
And I love them more than you could?
Don't you remember:
I promised to help them
And to do for them
What they cannot do for themselves,
But I promised, too,
To give them growing room
And to allow occasions for learning
Through tears as well as laughter,
Through defeat as well as triumph?

Don't you remember, little girl,
That I promised to take care of them?
That was *My* part — and what of yours?

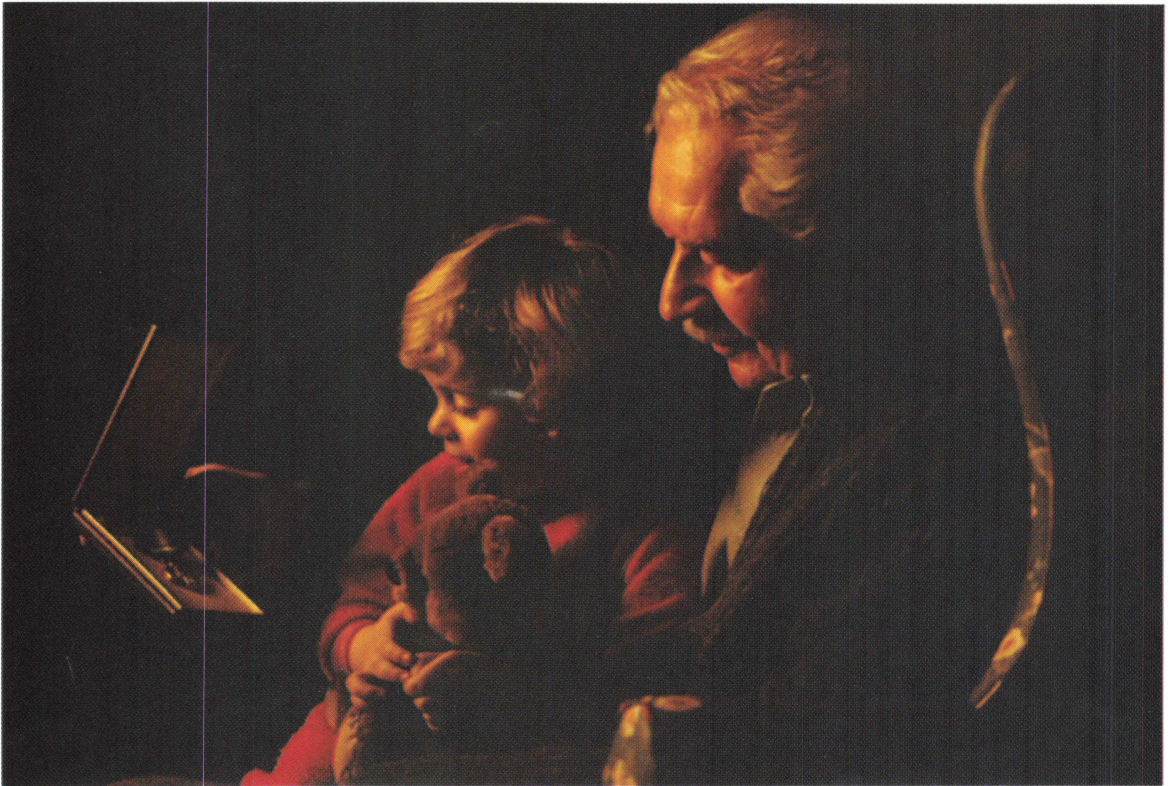
Not to worry,
Not to come with all these tears
But to trust *Me* —
And here you are again,
Sniffling!

Yes, I remember, too,
The work and dreams you asked about,
The teaching you would do.
Silly little girl,
The way you come,
Strong-hearted,
Pleading for My help,
One would think the Gospel yours
And that you must persuade *Me*
To see the world's great needs
And to help you with your work —
Hmmm ... Isn't it *My* work?
— Have you forgotten
Who is helping *Whom*?

Now don't you start crying again —
I know you miss him,
I know it hurts to be alone,
But, look —
I've given you a deeper love,
A sweeter kind of love,
Because you gave him up for Me.
Isn't it so?
And you know you're being a baby to cry —
But you're a big girl,
You've grown a lot.

**I know:
Most of the time you trust,
Most of the time you don't worry,
But sometimes you're weak
And you get tired.**

**Now, don't you cry any more;
Everything will work together — like I said —
For good;
— I promise —
Now put your head on My shoulder
And rest a little while**



NOTE: This photograph of a grandfather and his little granddaughter is not intended to be a portrayal of God but simply to create a visual image of His fatherly love for His children. He is showing her the “lock” to his heart.

— Betty Burton Choate

Questions

1. What is the plural form for the word “God” in Hebrew?
2. Quote John 4:24.
3. According to Exodus 19, what preparations did the Israelites make before being allowed into the presence of God?
4. What does God say about those who would approach Him, according to Leviticus 10:3?
5. Contrast our approach to God, according to Hebrews 12:18-20, with that of the Israelites.
6. _____ seems to be the first Person of the Godhead, the One who became the Father.
7. In what ways were humans created “in the image” of God?
8. What do Isaiah 37:16 and Amos 4:13 say about God’s work of creation?
9. In Psalm 86:15, God is described as being full of _____, _____, _____, and abundant in _____ and _____.
10. In the Scriptures listed, revealing the nature of God, many show that God expects His children to _____ to His image of _____.

In the Beginning Was the Word

Chapter Two

Sometimes people mistakenly conclude that “God the Father” is the One of the Godhead Who was active in the Old Testament, that “Jesus the Son” is the God of the New Testament, and that the “Holy Spirit” is the One of the Godhead working in this current age. If we pay close attention, we will see Elohim’s [the Godhead’s] work throughout the pages of Scripture.

It may come as a surprise to you when I say that we don’t read of *Jesus Christ* in the Old Testament. Stay with me through this lesson and you will see that the One who was born in the flesh — and named Jesus Christ — was the Person of the Godhead, “the Word” of the Old Testament, but most often in that portion of Scripture He was called “the Angel of the Lord”. This identification is confirmed by inspired Scripture, as we will see in our study.

What is the actual portrayal of the Word? In this lesson, we want to see that there are **five distinct periods** of His existence and work:

**The first period was His existence, eternally,
before the creation began.**

1. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made” (John 1:1-3).

What an exciting introduction to this One of the Godhead called the Word! He was there in the beginning *with* God, and was involved in all of creation. This shows that “the Word” was not “verbalization” by God but is a *separate Person* of the Godhead who became the *Spokesperson* for the Three. In addition to John 1:3 which states, “**All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made**”, we read these words in Ephesians 1:9: “**...God who created all things through Jesus Christ**” [Note that this is a New Testament reference to “Jesus Christ”, not a reference in the Old Testament].

Colossians 1:16,17: “For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.”

The second period was His existence as the Mediator for the Godhead during the Old Testament Period.

2. The Angel of the Lord. There are *many* references through-



out the Old Testament to this One called “the Angel of the Lord”, “the Angel of God”, “the Angel of His Presence”, or simply “My Angel”. In Genesis 22:11 and 15 we read of “**the Angel of the Lord**”, but in the following verses it is evident that One of the Godhead was actually doing the speaking to Abraham because He said, “... you have not withheld your son, your only son, from **Me**.” He further said, “**By Myself I** have sworn, says **the Lord**, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son — blessing / will bless you, and multiplying / will multiply your descendants.”

In Exodus 3:2 we read of Moses, “... **the Angel of the Lord** appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush.” In verse 4, the one appearing in the burning bush is identified as “**the Lord**”. In verse 6, He further identified Himself as “... **the God of your father — the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.**” The One who had spoken earlier (Genesis 26:24 and 28:13) to Isaac, and to Jacob had used the same words of identification.

In Exodus 23:20-23 and 33:2-5 the Lord of Hosts, speaking face to face with Moses, said, “**And I will send My Angel** before you, and I will drive out the Canaanite and the Amorite and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite. Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey; for **I will not go up in your midst**, lest I consume you on the way, for you are a stiff-necked people.” Exodus 14:19 says, “**And the Angel of God**, who went before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud went from before them and stood behind them.”

Isaiah 7-10 we read of the three of the Godhead: “**I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the Lord** and the praises of **the Lord**, according to all that the Lord has bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which He has bestowed on them according to His mercies, according to the multitude of His lovingkindnesses. For He said, ‘Surely they are My people, children who will not lie.’ So He became their Savior. In all their affliction He was afflicted, and **the Angel of His Presence** saved them; In His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bore them and carried them all the days of old. But they rebelled and grieved His **Holy Spirit**...”

Exodus 14:21 further defines the leadership in the wilderness: “**And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so as to go by day and night.**” Judges 2:1 says, “**Then the Angel of the Lord came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said: ‘I led you up from Egypt and brought you to the land of which I swore to your fathers; and I said, ‘I will never break My covenant with you.’”**” Obviously, since no created being would have had the authority to speak of “My” covenant, the Angel of the Lord was one of the Godhead, sent as God’s spokesman to many during the Old Testament era.

Read closely the statements in Isaiah 48:12,13,16: “**Listen to Me, O Jacob, and Israel, My called: I am He, I am the First, I am also the Last. Indeed My hand has laid the foundation of the earth, and My right hand has stretched out the heavens; When I call to them, they stand up together. ... Come near to Me, hear this: I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, I was there. And now the Lord God and His Spirit have sent Me.**”

What an astounding pronouncement! The One who was speaking called Himself “the First and the Last”. He claimed to be active in the creation of the universe. He declared Himself to be eternal, which would be true only of Elohim. And He closed with the declaration that *God and His Spirit* had sent *Him* to do His particular work! Obviously, these statements were made by One of the Godhead, and also obvious is the fact that “Me” is identified by His pronouncement that He was sent by the other two Persons of the Godhead! The One who was speaking had to be “the Word” who was born as Jesus Christ!

This One was there in creation. Isaiah 48 and 49 are detailed accounts of His work with the Israelites, but do inspired Scriptures identify the One of the Godhead Who led the children of Israel? 1 Corinthians 10:1-4 explains: “**Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.**”

It is evident from these and many, many additional passages that speak of this Angel — Messenger — of God, that the Word, in anticipation of the time when He would become one with mankind, assumed the role of Mediator from the beginning of God’s relationship with fallen man. We read of Him throughout the Old Testament and, invariably, the text clearly shows that this One was not a created angelic being but was One of the Godhead. [See Genesis 21:17; 22:11; 24:7; 31:11; Exodus 3:2; 14:19; Numbers 20:16; Joshua 5:13-15; Judges 2:1,4; 22:22; Judges 5:23; 6:11,12,20,22; Judges 13:9; 2 Kings 1:3,15; Psalm 34:7; Zechariah 1:11; 3:1-6.]

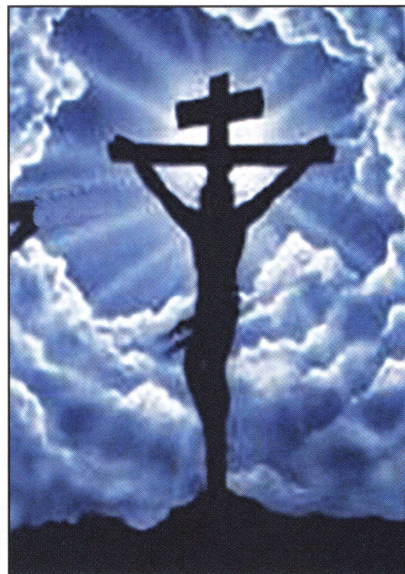
There are also countless passages in which “the word of the Lord” came to so-and-so, saying, “Thus says the Lord of Hosts”. Was this “the Word”, speaking as the Mediator between God and man?

The third period was His existence as the Son of God and the Son of Man

3. Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

We read in Revelation 13:8 that Christ was “... the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”

It was the Word, One of the Godhead, Who “**was slain from the foundation of the world**”. This is simply informing us that the plan for man’s redemption was made even before the creation. What was that plan? That the Word would lay aside His equality in the Godhead, becoming subject to the One who would be “the Father”, and the Word would be made in all things like humans. Hebrews 10:5 explains, “**Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You have prepared for Me.**” In Luke 1:35 an angel says to Mary, “**The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.**” Matthew 1:21 adds, “**And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.**”



We see from these passages that “the Word” was born in the flesh, as the Son of God: “**And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth**” (John 1:14).

In Hebrews 1:5,6 we read of the culmination of the eternal plan: “**For to which of the angels did He ever say: ‘You are My Son, today I have begotten You’? And again: ‘I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son’? But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: ‘Let all the angels of God worship Him.’**”

These verses tell us (1) that even though the Word is eternal, the Father-Son relationship had a beginning: “**today I have begotten You.**” (2) We can know that God was speaking of the One who became “Jesus Christ” because the verse describes the command to the angels to worship Him on the day when He was born into the world.

This is further explained in Philippians 2:5-8: “**Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.**”

The Word, according to Hebrews 2:17, “... in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.”

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us...” (John 1:14). So the Word laid aside the use of His own rights and powers, inherent in Deity, and was born in the human body that had been prepared for Him. As one with mankind, “... Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men” (Luke 2:52). The fact that He grew “in wisdom” shows the parallel of His development in line with that of other human children; such an amazing fact!

At His baptism, which marked the beginning of His ministry in the world, “... while He prayed, the heaven was opened. And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, ‘You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased.’” Repeatedly, in His work, Jesus said that the message He was speaking was not *His own* but was from God: “Jesus answered them and said, ‘My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me’” (John 7:16). “He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him — the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak” (John 12:48-50).

He also declared that the miraculous works He was doing were done by the power of the Holy Spirit, *not by His own power*: “And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, ‘He has Beelzebub,’ and, ‘By the ruler of the demons He casts out demons.’ So He called them to Himself and said to them in parables: ‘How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself, and is divided, he cannot stand, but has an end. No one can enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. And then he will plunder his house. Assuredly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they may utter; but **he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness**, but is subject to eternal condemnation’— because they said, ‘He has an unclean spirit’” (Mark 3:22-30).

Jesus taught the coming of the Kingdom throughout Israel, and He trained the Apostles in the work they were to do after Him. He was betrayed by one of His own, tried by the Sanhedrin, Pilate, and Herod, and was condemned to death by crucifixion. Finally, having fulfilled all the prophetic statements about His life and work as recorded by the prophets in the Old Testament, He cried, “**‘It is finished!’ And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit**” (John 19:30).

The covenant between God and man had been sealed with the blood of His Son, the perfect Brother of man, Who died in our stead, “... **Who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood...**” (Revelation 1:5).

But the story does not end there. Early on the first day of the week, an earthquake shook Jerusalem and an angel rolled the stone away from the tomb. Death was conquered when Christ arose, triumphant!



The fourth period is now, as He reigns as King of kings and Lord of lords.

4. The Exalted King.

Luke wrote an account of all that Jesus did and taught “... until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen, to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God” (Luke 1:2,3).

What happened when Jesus ascended to Heaven? “... the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come” (Ephesians 1:17-21).

He had declared to the Apostles, “**All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth...**” (Matthew 28:18). Go back to the prophetic statement in Daniel 7:13,14 as Daniel described the vision he saw: “**I was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. Then to**

Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed.”

This fourth period of the existence of the One of the Godhead called “the Word” and “Jesus Christ” is as **the King over His kingdom, the church, “the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords”** (1 Timothy 6:15). **“And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.”** He reigns now as **“Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth”** (Revelation 1:5).

Christ was born to bring into existence an obedient group of people which He called His “church” in Matthew 16:18. Christians are described as His body, and He is the head: **“And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all”** (Ephesians 1:22,23). Our Lord sits at God’s right hand, the Firstborn from the dead, resurrected from the tomb as — *still* — the brother of man and the Son of God! **“For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus...”** (1 Timothy 2:5).

1 Corinthians 15:27 explains that God “... **“has put all things under His feet. But when He says ‘all things are put under Him,’ it is evident that He [God, the Lord of Hosts] who put all things under Him is excepted.”**

The Apostle John recorded a heavenly vision in Revelation 20:4: **“I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.”** That reign is occurring now, and will continue until He comes to end this world in judgment.

1 Corinthians 15:23-28 completes the picture: **“Christ [is] the firstfruits [of the resurrection], afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming.**

“Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. ... Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.”

The fifth period begins after the judgment and extends eternally, from that point forward.

5. Heir of God and Joint-heir with Man.

Many, not reading the Scriptures closely, fail to realize that the exalted state of equality in the Godhead which the Word held from eternity was laid

aside when He emptied Himself and was born as the Son of God and the Son of man. Many are content to think He was “Jesus Christ” even before His birth into the world. And many more just assume that when He triumphed over death and returned to Heaven, everything in His relationship in the Godhead returned to its previous equality. We don’t read of these things in the Scriptures.

According to the passage we read in 1 Corinthians 15, Jesus Christ — *the Man* — is reigning now, **subject to God**, and He will reign *until* He has conquered death for all men. At that time, He will turn the kingdom over to God, and will in some sense be under an even deeper subjection to the Father than He is now!

What will happen then? According to Romans 8:16,17: “**The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs — heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.**” Are we paying attention to what those words are saying? that throughout the aeons of eternity following the judgment, **our firstborn Brother will inherit jointly with us!** The promise is made that we will be *glorified with Him!*

“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will **transform our lowly body** that it may be **conformed to His glorious body**, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself” (Philippians 3:20,21).

“Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! ... Beloved ... it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that **when He is revealed**, we shall be **like Him**, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”

“To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne” (Revelation 3:21).

Questions

1. Some mistakenly think that “God, the Father” was the one of the Godhead who was active in the _____, Jesus is the one active in the _____, and the Holy Spirit is the one of the Godhead who is active in this _____.
2. Do we read of “Jesus Christ” in the Old Testament?
3. Name the five distinct periods of the Word’s existence.
4. Reading Exodus 3 and 1 Corinthians 10:1-4, who was The Angel of the Lord?
5. When did the Word become the Son of God?
6. Who is not subject to Christ now, as He reigns as “King of kings”? (1 Corinthians 15:27)
7. What does it mean to be a “joint heir with Christ”? (Romans 8:16,17)
8. 1 Timothy 2:5 says that _____, Christ Jesus, is the mediator between God and man.
9. What will our bodies be like in the resurrection? (Philippians 3:20,21)
10. Who will sit with Christ on His throne in eternity? (Revelation 3:21)

The Spirit of God Moved

Chapter Three

The plural form of the Hebrew word for God is “Elohim”. It is used repeatedly in the Old Testament with a singular verb, not out of ignorance of the proper use of singulars and plurals, but to make a statement. Though the essence of Deity is one, there are three Persons: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit: Three united and acting as one.

The concept of Deity requires equality in attributes. God is eternal; so is the Word, and so is the Spirit. The same equality is true of power, omniscience, omnipresence, and the other characteristics that set Him apart from created beings. The conclusion? Before the advent of man on the scene — and, then, sin — there was equality of authority and power in the Godhead. Sin demanded either the loss of the entire human creation, or a great change in the relationship between the Lord of Hosts, the Word, and the Spirit. When the Word made the commitment to be born in a human body and to die for our sins, He subjected Himself in the Godhead, to become the Son of God in the process of becoming the Son of man. The Lord of Hosts, therefore, became “the Father”, in a role of authority over the Son. As we read in Isaiah 48:16, both the Father and the Spirit *sent* the Word into the world, which shows their joint authority over Him.

But when Jesus was speaking to the disciples in John 14:16,26, He promised that the Father would *send* “another Helper”, “Parakletos”, the Greek word for “Comforter”, one who encourages and intercedes. The wording indicates that from the Day of Pentecost (when the Spirit was poured out on the Apostles) and throughout the Christian dispensation, the Spirit has come under subjection to “the Lord of Hosts” who had the authority to “send” Him, not only in the baptismal measure to the Apostles but to all who are baptized into Christ, restoring spiritual life to their souls that were dead in sin. The

promise was made in Acts 2:38 that the obedient would have the forgiveness of their sins and would “...receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

As with the first chapter of this book, dealing with “the Lord of Hosts”, most of this lesson will be quotations from Scripture itself. Why? Because we as humans have not seen a physical presence of God or of the Holy Spirit, so it would be presumptuous of us to write our own thinking of details of His existence or His nature. However, we have many definitive statements in His revealed word that help us to understand Him — His eternality, His nature, His power, and His relationship with His creation. I pray that you will read these passages carefully so that you can see what God’s Holy Spirit teaches us about Himself.

Actually, the Spirit, His work in the world, and His relationship with man are not delineated with specifics in the Old Testament, but the New Testament is filled with an abundance of that information. Let us see what the Scriptures teach:

● **By the Spirit we are born into God’s Family in baptism:**

“Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.’ Nicodemus said to Him, ‘How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?’ Jesus answered, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God’” (John 3:3-5).

● **Through Him, we who were dead spiritually are made alive again:**

“But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you” (Romans 8:9-11).

● **Through Him, we enter the body, the church:**

“For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body — whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free — and have all been made to drink into one Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:13).

● **He is our seal of redemption:**

“... who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee” (2 Corinthians 1:22).

● **He is our helper:**

“And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever — the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells

with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you” (John 14:16-18).

● **He is our guarantor:**

“Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, **who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee**” (2 Corinthians 5:5).

● **We live in Him:**

“... who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but **the Spirit gives life**” (2 Corinthians 3:6).

● **We walk in Him:**

“I say then: **Walk in the Spirit**, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish” (Galatians 5:16,17).

● **He leads us:**

“But if you are **led by the Spirit**, you are not under the [Mosaic] law” (Galatians 5:18).

● **He dwells in us:**

“That good thing which was committed to you, keep by **the Holy Spirit who dwells in us**” (2 Timothy 1:14).

“Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that **the Spirit of God dwells in you**? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are” (1 Corinthians 3:16,17).

● **He abides in us:**

“By this we know that **we abide in Him, and He in us**, because He has given us of His Spirit” (1 John 4:13).

● **Through Him we bear fruit:**

“But **the fruit of the Spirit** is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law” (Galatians 5:22,23).

● **He strengthens us:**

“...that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, **to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man**, that **Christ may dwell in your hearts** through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height — to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that **you may be filled with all the fullness of God**. Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen (Ephesians 3:16-21).

- **Through Him we put to death the deeds of the body:**
 “For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if **by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body**, you will live” (Romans 8:13).
- **He bears witness that we are the children of God:**
 “**The Spirit Himself bears witness** with our spirit that we are children of God” (Romans 8:16).
- **He groans the words we cannot articulate, making intercession for us:**
 “Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but **the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings** which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because **He makes intercession for the saints** according to the will of God” (Romans 8:26, 27).
- **He teaches us:**
 “These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which **the Holy Spirit teaches**, comparing spiritual things with spiritual” (1 Corinthians 2:13).
- **He discerns:**
 “But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because **they are spiritually discerned**” (1 Corinthians 2:14).
- **He gives life:**
 “**It is the Spirit who gives life**; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life” (John 6:63).
- **He gives liberty:**
 “Now the Lord is the Spirit; and **where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty**” (2 Corinthians 3:17).
- **He transforms us as we look into the mirror of the image of Christ:**
 “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being **transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord**” (2 Corinthians 3:18).
- **Through Him we reap life:**
 “For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit **will of the Spirit reap everlasting life**” (Galatians 6:8).
- **Through Him we have access to the Father:**
 “For through Him **we both have access by one Spirit to the Father**” (Ephesians 2:18).
- **We pray in Him:**
 “These are sensual persons, who cause divisions, not having the Spirit.

But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, **praying in the Holy Spirit**, keep yourselves in **the love of God**, looking for **the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ** unto eternal life” (Jude 1:19-21).

- **We abound in hope through the power of the Spirit:**

“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may **abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit**” (Romans 15:13).

- **It is through the Spirit that we become the habitation of God:**

“...in whom you also are being built together for a **dwelling place of God in the Spirit**” (Ephesians 2:22).

- **It is possible for us to grieve Him:**

“And **do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God**, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption” (Ephesians 4:30).

- **It is possible for us to quench Him:**

“**Do not quench the Spirit**” (1 Thessalonians 5:19).

- **He, along with the church, says, “Come”:**

“And **the Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’** And let him who hears say, ‘Come!’ And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely” (Revelation 22:17).

This wording, in itself, indicates strongly that the Holy Spirit is the abiding Presence with the church and with Christians in this world, as we together await the coming of our Savior.

Questions

1. Though the essence of Deity is one, there are _____: Three united, and acting as one.
2. According to Isaiah 48:16, who sent the Word into the world?
3. When Jesus was about to ascend to the Father, what did He promise to do, in order to aid the Apostles in their work?
4. How are we born into God's family?
5. Through Whom are we, who were dead spiritually, made alive again?
6. Through Whom do we have the "seal of redemption"?
7. If we walk "in the Spirit" we will not fulfill what lusts?
8. Name the fruits of the Spirit.
9. When we cannot articulate what we long to say in prayer to God, who helps us?
10. Through ungodly actions, it is possible for us to _____ the Spirit, and even to _____ Him. (Ephesians 4:30; 1 Thessalonians 5:19).

The Nature of God

Chapter Four

The Attributes of God

❖ **God is eternal.** “Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, **You are God**” (Psalm 90:1,2).

“The eternal God is your refuge, And underneath are the everlasting arms...” (Deuteronomy 33:27).

“Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen” (1 Timothy 1:17).

❖ **God is omni-present** [everywhere-present]. “‘Am I a God near at hand,’ says the Lord, ‘and not a God afar off? Can anyone hide himself in secret places, so I shall not see him?’ says the Lord; ‘Do I not fill heaven and earth?’ says the Lord” (Jeremiah 23:23, 24).

“There is no one like the God of Jeshurun, Who rides the heavens to help you, and in His excellency on the clouds” (Deuteronomy 33:26).

“Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in hell [Sheol, the place of the dead], behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me. If I say, ‘Surely the darkness shall fall on me,’ even the night shall be light about me; indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, but the night shines as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to You” (Psalm 139:7-12).

❖ **God is omnipotent** [all-powerful]. “And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, ‘Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!’” (Revelation 19:6).

“Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh. Is there anything too hard for Me?” (Jeremiah 32:27).

“But indeed for this purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth” (Exodus 9:16).

“Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, the power and the glory, the victory and the majesty; for all that is in heaven and in earth is Yours; Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and You are exalted as head over all. Both riches and honor come from You, and You reign over all. In Your hand is power and might; in Your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all” (1 Chronicles 29:11,12).

“O Lord God of our fathers, are You not God in heaven, and do You not rule over all the kingdoms of the nations, and in Your hand is there not power and might, so that no one is able to withstand You?” (2 Chronicles 20:6).

“Lift up your eyes on high, and see who has created these things, Who brings out their host by number; He calls them all by name, by the greatness of His might and the strength of His power; not one is missing” (Isaiah 40:26).

“He has made the earth by His power, He has established the world by His wisdom, and has stretched out the heavens at His discretion” (Jeremiah 10:12).

“The Lord is slow to anger and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked. The Lord has His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of His feet” (Nahum 1:3).

“But Jesus looked at them and said, ‘With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible’” (Mark 10:27).

❖ **God is omniscient** [all-knowing, able to see all time]. “... I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done...” (Isaiah 46:9,10).

“I have declared the former things from the beginning; they went forth from My mouth ... Even from the beginning I have declared it to you; before it came to pass I proclaimed it to you...” (Isaiah 48:3,5).

“For I know their works and their thoughts...” (Isaiah 66:18).

“For My eyes are on all their ways; they are not hidden from My face, nor is their iniquity hidden from My eyes” (Jeremiah 16:17).

“...the Lord searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts...” (1 Chronicles 28:9).

“My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed, and in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them” (Psalm 139:15,16).

“And He said to them, ‘You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts’” (Luke 16:15).

❀ **God is holy.** “But the Lord of hosts shall be exalted in judgment, and God who is holy shall be hallowed in righteousness” (Isaiah 5:16).

“... You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy” (Leviticus 19:2).

“... He is a holy God. He is a jealous God” (Joshua 24:19).

“No one is holy like the Lord, for there is none besides You, nor is there any rock like our God” (1 Samuel 2:2).

“But the Lord of hosts shall be exalted in judgment, and God who is holy shall be hallowed in righteousness” (Isaiah 5:16).

“For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior...” (Isaiah 43:3).

“Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: ‘I am the Lord your God ... Who leads you by the way you should go’” (Isaiah 48:17).

“... The Lord of hosts is His name; and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel; He is called the God of the whole earth” (Isaiah 54:5).

❀ **God is love.** “He who does not love does not know God, for God is love” (1 John 4:8).

“‘I have loved you,’ says the Lord” (Malachi 1:2).

“For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38,39).

“But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us...” (Ephesians 2:4).

“In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins ... And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him” (1 John 4:10,16).

❀ **God is just.** “He is the Rock, His work is perfect; For all His

ways are justice, a God of truth and without injustice; Righteous and upright is He” (Deuteronomy 32:4).

“God is a just judge, and God is angry with the wicked every day” (Psalm 7:11).

“Who has declared this from ancient time? Who has told it from that time? Have not I, the Lord? And there is no other God besides Me, a just God and a Savior; There is none besides Me” (Isaiah 45:21).

“[God Will Be Gracious] Therefore the Lord will wait, that He may be gracious to you; And therefore He will be exalted, that He may have mercy on you. For the Lord is a God of justice; Blessed are all those who wait for Him” (Isaiah 30:18).

❀ **God is forgiving.** “... I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land” (2 Chronicles 7:14).

“For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, and abundant in mercy to all those who call upon You” (Psalm 86:5).

“No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more” (Jeremiah 31:34).

“But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared” (Psalm 130:4).

“To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against Him” (Daniel 9:9).

“... and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors” (Matthew 6:12).

“But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses” (Mark 11:26).

❀ **God is merciful.** “The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy. He will not always strive with us, nor will He keep His anger forever. He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear Him, for He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust” (Psalm 103:8-14).

“‘I am merciful,’ says the Lord; ‘I will not remain angry forever’” (Jeremiah 3:12).

“Praise the Lord! Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever” (Psalm 106:1).

✝ **God is patient.** “Therefore the Lord will wait, that He may be gracious to you; and therefore He will be exalted, that He may have mercy on you. For the Lord is a God of justice...” (Isaiah 30:18).

“The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth...” (Exodus 34:6).

“The Lord is longsuffering and abundant in mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression...” (Numbers 14:18).

“But You, O Lord, are a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in mercy and truth” (Psalm 86:15).

“Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?” (Romans 2:4).

“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

“... and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation...” (2 Peter 3:15).

How beautifully these words describe the God of the universe! All of us who know Him should fall to our knees in thanksgiving for the knowledge and the salvation it can bring to our lives.



The Limitations of God

God is certainly all-powerful, but He also has limitations! How can that be?

✝ **God is inherently just.** Looking from the limited view of humans, sometimes we may not understand why God allows some terrible things to happen; or why in some cases, as recorded in Scripture, He actually causes the horrible events. Bottom line, the total result is one of justness. His mercy is great, but it cannot cancel out His attribute of justness. Sin that is unrepented-of, and therefore unforgiven, must be punished.

✝ **God cannot lie.** Whatever He says or does is ultimate truth. This realization gives us rock-solid assurance that every promise made in Scripture will be honored by the God Who made it. The “iffy” factor is the human part of the equation: Will we be faithful to Him so that He can pour out on us the blessings and gifts He has promised? or will we rebel against Him, in transgression of His law and, thereby, require that He pour out the judgment and condemnation He has also promised to those who turn their backs on Him?

“God is not a man, that He should lie...” (Numbers 23:19).

“... in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began...” (Titus 1:2).

“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning” (James 1:17).

✝ **God has given man “free will”.** Without this gift, sin would never have entered the world, but man’s “love” for God would have been a meaningless built-in nothing. None of us would treasure a robot parroting out words of love whenever a button was pushed, and God didn’t want that either. God’s love is real, an outpouring of all the word includes: deep affection, concern, tenderness, compassion, and mercy. He wants all of that, in return, from us, born from *our own choice* to put Him first in our lives. The false doctrine that God has “elected” that certain individuals be saved and others be lost is not based on Scripture. It is true that “election” is there, but the “elect” are those who, *themselves*, choose to obey God to be saved, thus *placing themselves in the category of “the elect”*. It is not the arbitrary choosing by God of certain individuals over others. Each of us is free to choose, then suffer the consequences of our choices, or enjoy the resulting blessings.

“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). This promise could not have been made by our Lord if individual humans did not have the freedom to choose for themselves whether to obey or to disobey God.

✝ **God is bound by His law, just as man is bound.** Because of the horror of hell — the eternal punishment described in Scripture — humans long to believe that our God of love would never condemn anyone to a devil’s hell for eternity. Their thinking is that no one deserves such a sentence of torment.

However, God has laid out very specific guidelines in His word, and the promise is made, **“He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him — the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day”** (John 12:48). If it is true that God does not lie, then no one can expect on that great judgment day that He will look at some piteous, rebellious soul and say, “For you, I will set aside my law and will allow you to enter Heaven.” If He would do such a thing, then nothing that is written in Scripture is reliable. Let us not, in our wildest imagination or in our faulty human judgment, raise such a doubt concerning God’s promises. Instead, let us be diligent to live, ourselves, according to Scripture, and let us spend our lives sharing that Truth with the souls around us.

Questions

1. God is _____. Did He have a beginning?
2. God is omni-present. What does that mean?
3. God is omni-potent. What does that mean?
4. God is omniscient. What does that mean?
5. List six other attributes of God.
6. Does God have limitations?
7. How does being “inherently just” limit God?
8. How does the fact that He cannot lie limit God?
9. What does it mean that God gave man “free will”?
10. How does this limit God?
11. We have God’s new covenant, the New Testament, sealed with the blood of His Son. In this covenant are given commands, warnings, and promises. Are Humans bound by these words, and will they judge us on that final day? Is God also bound by these words?

The Saga of Creation

Chapter Five

Genesis tells us the basic points of creation, points of faith on which the entire Bible rests. I am thankful for that inspired record, so that we know how everything came to be, and by Whose power it is sustained. But I thought it would be interesting to combine a lot of scientific research with some imaginary scenes, to develop a "saga of creation". Please understand that I mean nothing disrespectful by writing this chapter and the next, nor do I suggest that this is at all what happened or might have been said "behind the scenes". With that disclaimer, let's mentally turn the clock back to "before time"....

No thing was there, and yet the endlessness of space and the eternity before time were filled by the awesomeness and the presence of Elohim. Still-ness, silence, a poignant sense of waiting...

God spoke: "We have had no beginning, and We will have no ending. But in addition to being eternal, Our essence is *love*. We have the power to create beings as miniature copies of Ourselves, with the ability to think, to reason, to feel Our love and to love Us in response. They would not be eternal, but We could give them the gift of life — of immortality — so that once We bring them into existence they will never die. We can also give them the ability to reproduce so that not only will they be able to love Us but they will also be able to give that love to their offspring and to receive their love in return! It would be a perfect cycle of life and love among Us and them!"

"But, wait!" the Word spoke up. "I see horror! Among the spirit beings We would make to help the human beings, there will be revolt, and war will break out in heaven because of that rebellion. Then the humans will be tempted to disobey Us and they will bring sin to humanity. We would lose all that we have made, and they would have no way to come back to Us!"

"Yes, disobedience and sin would separate them from Us in spiritual death, and they would be helpless...."

Silence.

“There *is* a way,” the Word said quietly. “One who is without sin could be born into the human world and could take the burden of their sins and die in their place....”

Silence.

“I will do that,” the Word said. “There would be shame for Me, but greater than the shame would be the joy of sharing our love and glory with many brothers and sisters eternally.... I will do that.” **“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth”** (John 1:14). [He was] **“...the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world”** (Revelation 13:8).



The host of Heaven was created.

“In the beginning Elohim created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep” (Genesis 1:1,2).

Elohim said, “Let Us develop this great creation! In order for everything to work, there must be light.”

The Word responded, “Let there be light,” and brilliance flooded the expanse of space on the first day of the week of creation. Many centuries later, the practice would be established that on the first day of each week, a supper would be eaten to commemorate the death and resurrection of the *Light of the world!*

“Now, this thing that we are making will need a period of light and a period of rest, so We’ll divide into parts this ‘time’ that We’ve made and We’ll call them ‘day’ and ‘night’. The hours of light will be used for activity and work, making existence productive; darkness will be the time for recovery when rest will bring renewed strength and healing for the body.”

The Spirit of God was brooding over the face of the waters. The Lord of Hosts said, “We will divide the waters, with an expanse of space We’ll call ‘Heaven’. Because it will be the air that becomes the breath of life for everything that lives, it must be made up of the necessary gases: Nitrogen to form the compounds with other gases and chemicals to make life possible, hydrogen to provide the necessary moisture, oxygen for humans to breathe, carbon dioxide for plants to breathe.... And we’ll renew and replenish the air by having humans to exhale carbon dioxide, and plants to give off oxygen! That will be a perfect cycle!”

Then the Word separated the waters so that they surrounded the “firmament” and were also covering something inside the firmament. At the end of the second day, the Lord of Hosts, the Word, and the Spirit of God looked at the work They had done. They agreed, “Tomorrow will be a day of mighty creation!”



Then God said, “Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear; and it was so” (Genesis 1:9).

“Now,” the Lord of Hosts announced, “We have the foundational parts We need for this new world We’re making:

- * **air**, with the gases necessary for the breath of life: nitrogen, hydrogen, carbon dioxide, and oxygen;
- * **soil**, which We will call “earth”, with the many minerals and nutrients necessary to feed plant life — nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, sulfur, magnesium, calcium — and others that humans won’t know they need for many centuries [but *We* know!];
- * **water**, which We will call “seas”. Not only does water fill the river beds and the ocean, but it will be hydrogen as vapor in the air, and it must permeate the earth in order for plant roots to take hold and grow.”

“And We have **light!**” added the Word. “It will be absorbed as energy through the leaves and then converted into chemical energy to supply the plants’ needs in growth! Photosynthesis — that amazing ability of plants to nurture themselves in this way — will be *Our* secret for a long, long time. Humans will see that plants don’t survive in dark places, so they’ll understand that light is necessary, but they won’t know how or why!”



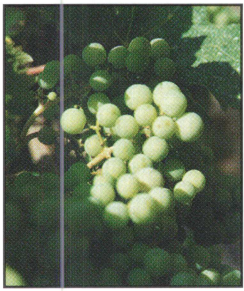
“So let’s make it happen!” urged the Spirit.

“Before We can have human and animal life on this new earth,” God said, “We must have an abundance of food for them to eat as well as plants to cover the earth with growth so that the exchange of oxygen for carbon dioxide will always be balanced.”

“And within the plants must be the seeds that will grow up to replace what is eaten!” added the Word.

“That means we have to create the plant life as *full grown*, to start with,” reasoned the Spirit. “If We begin with seeds, it would take months for some plants to grow to maturity so that they could produce food for humans — who, by then, would have starved to death!”

“Plants that grow up year after year can be the major food supply for both humans and animals, but they will also need the balance of nutrients from fruit that will grow on bushes and trees — and some of them will take years to mature! So, yes,” agreed the Word, “We must create them full-grown, already bearing fruit, and already having the seeds that can be scattered by the wind or by birds or even by humans who become farmers, so that everything will have a cycle of being replenished.”

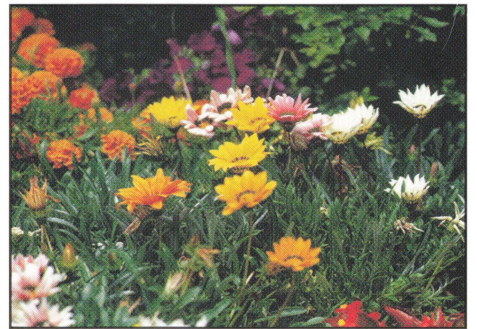


“We have designed a spectacular way to bring water and nutrients to every cell of a plant, even to the tallest trees!” God exclaimed. “How long will it take humans to figure out that there are thin hollow tubes from the roots to the farthest leaves, and that the sun’s evaporation of water from the leaves creates a suction within those hollow tubes that draws water and nutrients up and up and up, even to the top of trees that may be 300 feet tall? It’s an invisible, marvelous system!”

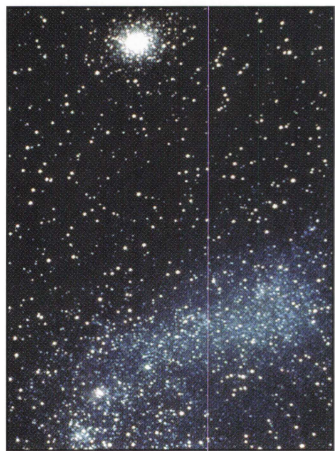
“Then God said, ‘Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth,’ and it was so ... And God saw that it was good. So the evening and the morning were the third day.

“Then God said, ‘Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years; and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth.’

“Then God made two great lights: the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night. He made the stars also. God set them in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth, and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness ... So the evening and the morning were the fourth day” (Genesis 1:11-19).



“And God saw that it was good.” “Look at the beauty of what We’ve made!” the Spirit exclaimed. “Such a contrast between the blue, blue sky,



the white clouds, the many shades of green in the grass and trees, and every possible color in the blooms of the plants! We've even decorated the world with thousands of flower-types of multitudes of sizes and shapes and colors! What a beautiful place!"

"And the night sky is filled with brilliant gems!" the Word laughed. "Humans from the beginning will be able to see thousands of our stars, but far down the road of time they will invent telescopes so that they can see how many billions more We've created, and they will even have a small concept of the hugeness of 'space' — billions of *light-years* of miles! As with the creation of plant life

on the earth — that it had to be created "full-grown" in order to meet the needs of the humans and animals that will inhabit it — the light from the sun and stars had to be created "full-grown" too, already reaching the earth from the moment of creation, so that life can be sustained NOW, not "light years" down the way. The plants couldn't live for centuries without sunlight, and neither could humans. Everything we make must be fully operational, as an integral part of the interwoven whole. 'Time' will be a long road of discovery for the humans who sincerely want to see the greatness of Our power in creation."

"Inquisitive minds will learn, too" interjected the Spirit, "that we have set up the Universe so that everything works in an orderly way, to a fixed schedule. They'll observe the effects of the force of gravity, and will put a lot of research into trying to figure out how 'gravity' holds everything in place. They'll see that when something is dropped it will fall down to the earth rather than flying up in their face, but they won't actually know what gravity is! It will be a mystery!"

"How long will it be before they learn that the lesser light We've made — the moon — not only gives light to the earth at night [actually, only a reflection of the sun, not its own light at all!] but also controls the sweeping tides of the ocean! We've tied everything together, so that every part of our creation is interdependent on every other part!" exclaimed the Word. "Oh! And We had to be very careful in the placement of the earth in its orbit around the sun and its distance from the sun. A little too close and everything would be burned up, but a little too far away and the whole of creation would freeze."

"When humans learn more about astronomy," God added, "they'll realize that there are other planets in addition to Earth, in what they'll call the 'solar system'. They'll develop instruments that will enable them to measure the speed at which the earth spins on its mysterious invisible axis — 1,000 miles an hour, causing the 24-hour day and night — and that it orbits that blazing ball of gases that We will call the sun, moving 67,000 miles an hour, covering almost 600 million miles to make a 365-day year! They'll learn, too, that the whole solar

system is moving through space at many thousands of miles an hour! ***But they won't feel any of that movement!*** Why? That's another one of the mysteries of Our power in creation!"

"And of the power of the Word," said the Spirit, "Who will then be **"upholding all things by the word of His power, when He has by Himself purged [man's] sins, [and] sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high"** (Hebrews 1:3).

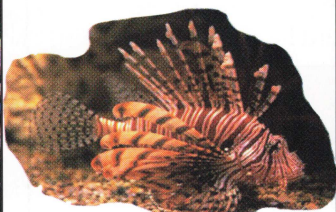
Day five: "We're ready, now, to add to this world the living, moving creatures for which it is being made," God announced.

"Today let's make life in the sea and in the air," the Word continued.

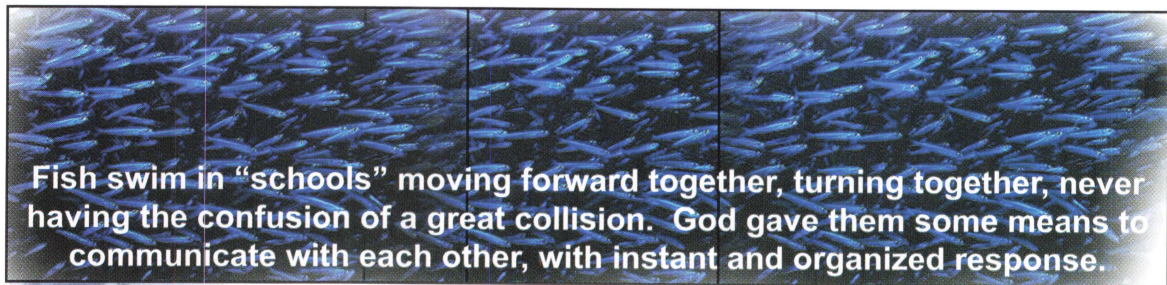
"Then God said, 'Let the waters abound with an abundance of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the face of the firmament of the heavens.'... So God created great sea creatures and every living thing that moves, with which the waters abounded, according to their kind, and every winged bird according to its kind" (Genesis 1:20,21).

"Looking at the water," the Word said, thoughtfully, "no one would imagine what a wonderworld we will have created for life underneath the surface. We will have rivers, lakes, salty water and fresh water, water a few inches deep and water thousands of feet deep."

The Spirit agreed, "We can create many, many thousands of kinds of "sea life": plants, corals, sponges, and creatures that live in shells of all colors and shapes and sizes."



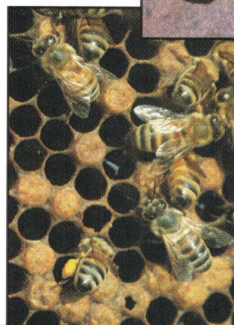
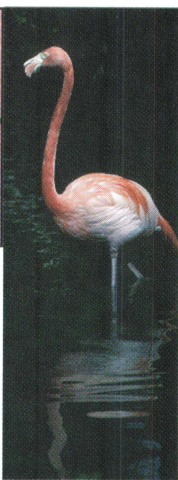
"And the fish?" God added, "Look at this monster! He even has a light beam to attract his prey for food! We'll make many variations of each species, and each one will have its own characteristics. People may wonder why We would make so many colors and designs since fish live in the water and many of them will never be seen by humans, but why not? Beauty and artistry, as well as intricate and workable design, are part of Our make-up. Humans, made in Our image with ability to discern and appreciate beauty, will recognize Our creative hand in every detail they see. Wherever they look, even in the depths of the ocean, they will see undeniable evidence of God."



“We’ve created many thousands of aquatic creatures,” the Word said. “Now let’s populate the air with flying creatures — birds and insects and butterflies and bees, even the huge flying reptiles that humans will someday call quetzalcoatlus!”

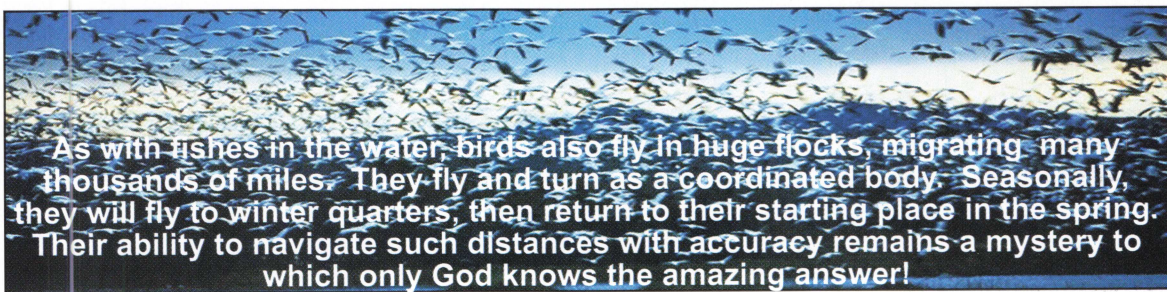


“There is no lack of variety in the bird population we’re making,” God said. “We cover all the sizes and shapes and mixtures of colors! We have pink pelicans with long legs so they can walk in deep waters, and long necks so they can reach down and scoop up their food. Now, what if we had made necks like most birds? Pelicans would break a leg or starve to death, just trying to figure out how to eat!”



“Again,” the Holy Spirit spoke up, “everything is interrelated with the whole. The scattering of seeds and the pollination of plants will be done by Our flying creations. Look at this seemingly insignificant little bee. We’ll have him to make sweet honey. Humans will like its taste, but it will also be an important ‘natural’ medicine. And without his work in pollination, many food crops would fail and whole populations would starve.”

“And God saw that it was good. And God blessed them, saying, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.’ So the evening and the morning were the fifth day” (Genesis 1:20-23).



As with fishes in the water, birds also fly in huge flocks, migrating many thousands of miles. They fly and turn as a coordinated body. Seasonally, they will fly to winter quarters, then return to their starting place in the spring. Their ability to navigate such distances with accuracy remains a mystery to which only God knows the amazing answer!

Questions

1. Before the creation began, the _____ of space and the _____ before time were filled by the awesomeness and the presence of _____.
2. The essence of God is _____.
3. In order to give His love and to receive love in response, God created miniature copies of Himself, with what abilities?
4. Since these created beings could not be eternal (no beginning and no end), God gave them _____ souls, so that they would never cease to exist.
5. What was the one thing that would separate God from the humans He would create?
6. The Word, born in the flesh as the Son of God and Brother of man was the _____. (Rev. 13:8)
7. Because everything in creation is so interwoven, everything had to be created _____ (page 39).

What did God make on the fifth day?

The Pinnacle of Creation: Humans

Chapter Six

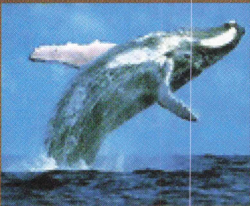
“What a day this one will be!” exclaimed the Lord of Hosts. “We have prepared the complete and perfect dwelling for what will be the pinnacle of our creation! Everything — the sun, moon, and stars, the atmosphere, the earth itself and every living thing, from the largest living creature to the invisible atoms of nature — everything is interwoven, working together to sustain the whole. Without the sun, the air, the water, nothing could live, and without even such miniscule things as bees to pollinate, the plants would not produce food, but our fully developed ‘home’ is ready for its occupants! Today we create animals of all sorts and, finally — humans, made in our likeness!”

Work began and, added to the innumerable thousands of kinds of fishes, birds, insects and other creatures were thousands of kinds of mammals: warm blooded creatures that give birth to their young instead of laying eggs, and that nurse the babies.

“In addition to everything else We’ve made that shows the unlimited power We possess, the animal world we are making will be a great testimony,” the Word said.

“Yes, Our ‘handiwork’ is so diverse, so amazing, it will be a continual testimony to Our existence and to Our intelligence and creative ability.”

“This little creature may be counted as a ‘nothing’, but there is intricate design in its body, and every cell functions like a busy city!”



“We’ll design this one to live in the ocean, even though it is actually a mammal that births its babies.

It will be a long time before humans can study Our blue whales and realize that they grow to be 100 feet long and weigh as much as 2000 humans!” said the Spirit.

Then the Lord God spoke up, “And in between all of these are thousands of varieties that have their own distinct characteristics, and will reproduce after their kind. But within the design — the DNA — of each one will be the blueprints for many variations.”

“Yes, We’ll make only one ‘dog’ but within his DNA will be directions that can produce wolves and coyotes and countless other types of dog ‘kinds’. Humans will do lots of ‘inter-breeding’ that will produce amazing changes in the ‘dogs’ but all of the information will already be embedded from Our hands. Humans will not have the ability to ‘create’ any new information.”



“Look at this one I’ve made in the horse family,” laughed the Word.

“He looks like a horse but I’ve painted stripes on him! We’re making colors, colors, colors everywhere!

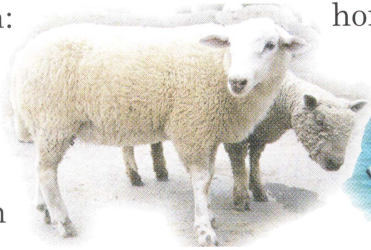
What a different world it would

look like if everything was just shades of black with some white. But, let’s see: how many variations of color do we have? Oh, yes! It’s like everything else in our ‘bag of handiwork tools’ — limitless, never-ending!”



“In the beginning of creation, all of our animals can be non-threatening — they’ll even be vegetarian like humans — but after that great fall that sin brings into the world, some of our animal creatures will be easy to tame and will be useful to man:

some will become carnivorous, eating other animals and even humans when they can catch them.”



horses, cows, sheep, dogs... but

“We’ll have wild creatures like bears and lions and tigers. But the gentle little ‘cat’ that humans will take into their homes will be in this wild family — and they’ll be useful for catching those pesky mice that will try to get into everything!” the Spirit remarked, busy with His shaping of each animal He was naming.

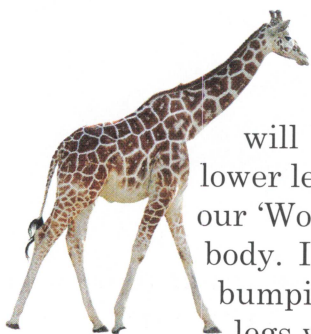


“Look at this creature!” the Lord God exclaimed, pointing to a huge, frightening looking animal with a big horn above his nose. “This rhinoceros will be among the wild and dangerous creatures that man will not tame.”





“This huge elephant looks frightening because of his size and his ivory tusks and long ‘trunk’ for drinking water. In the wild, he can be dangerous, but man will be able to tame him, ride him, use him for hauling heavy loads — and far down the stream of time such a thing as a ‘circus’ will be dreamed up and elephants will be creatures of entertainment!” the Spirit foretold with a smile.

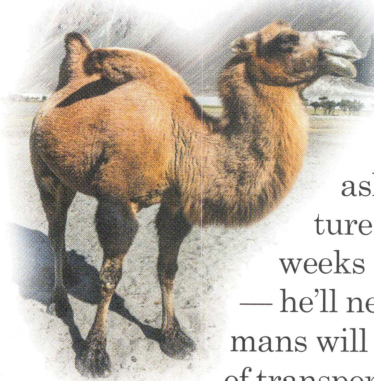


“How about this amazing animal?” the Word asked as He completed shaping the l-o-n-g legs and equally l-o-n-g neck of a giraffe. “This interesting specimen will be able to reach the leaves high up in trees, leaving the lower leaves for smaller animals. And just like everything else in our ‘Wonder World’, there is design behind the other parts of his body. If his legs were short, and his neck long, he’d be continually bumping his head on the ground. If his neck was short and his legs were long, he’d have a problem getting his head down low enough for a drink of water. But not only is he all balanced out in his legs and neck, but I’ve put valves in his neck so that when he lowers his head to drink, the blood won’t rush to his brain and kill him! Down the road of time humans will study our animal world and will learn many of these details of creation — following along to the extent that human minds will be able to follow Our creative thought process. They’ll learn some amazing things!”

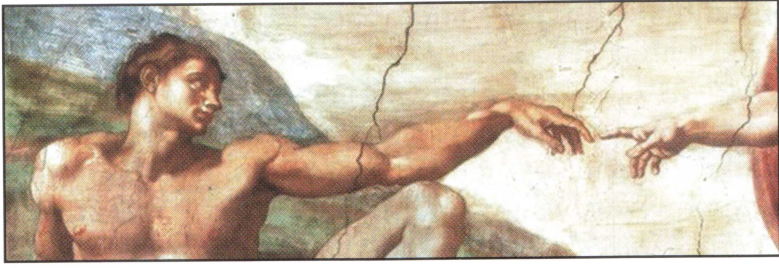
“Some of our animal creations, like this kangaroo, will give birth to their babies but then will have their own built-in ‘baby carriage’ for keeping the new little one warm and safe until it is mature enough to live outside of the



pouch. With its strong hind legs for hopping, those babies will have some exciting rides,” laughed the Word.



“How do you like this animal?” the Lord God asked as He finished molding a hairy, two-humped creature. “This ‘camel’ will be a desert animal, able to live for two weeks without a drink of water and for a month without food — he’ll need that rare ability during his life in hot, dry places. Humans will learn that he can be tamed and make an excellent mode of transportation — look at his big flat feet — crossing desert sands.



The Crown of Creation

“And God made the beast of the earth according to its kind, cattle according to its kind, and everything that creeps on the earth according to its kind. **And God saw that it was good.**

“Then God said, **‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth’**” (Genesis 1:25,26).

“And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being”(Genesis 2:7).

An aside: Amazingly, through God’s inspiration, the writer of Genesis informed us that the human body is made from **the dust of the earth** — scientific knowledge that man would not have as a result of his own studies for many centuries! It is true that the elements of which our bodies are made are the same as “the dust of the earth”, and the health of our bodies is sustained as we eat the vegetation (or the flesh of animals that have eaten the vegetation) that grows from the earth and incorporates these elements for our preservation! Then, when plants die, and when animals die, and when humans die, everything goes back to the dust from which it was formed! Isn’t it astounding that God made dust into jillions of textures and colors and shapes, and gave individual life to every particle of it but, when death comes, everything decays back to its original form: just **DUST!**

[The joke is told that an atheist challenged God, declaring that he could also make a human. God agreed to let him do what he could. The atheist bent down to pick up a handful of dirt, but God ordered: **“Get your own dirt!”** Ha! Yes, we humans can make amazing things *from the materials* God brought into existence from nothing — but when *we* start with *nothing*, we can do *nothing!*]

Now, back to the Creation: All the preparatory work of making the “home” suitable for humanity was completed, and now began the creation of the ones for whom everything had been done: **humans, made in the image of God.** What does that description really mean?

Psalms 8:5 says, **“What is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him? For You have made him a little lower than Elohim and**

You have crowned him with glory and honor.” Elohim — the Godhead — the Lord God, the Word, and the Spirit of God — are eternal, having no beginning and no ending of existence. Humans, of necessity, had a beginning but God placed *an immortal soul* in the body of the human so that he would never die. In this way, unlike all other living beings of creation who have *the breath of life but no soul*, man was designed to be **only a little lower than God Himself! Created without the curse of sin, man was above everything else because of the immortal soul he was given!** What a gift!

But being made **“in His image”** entails much more than immortality. If we compare humans with animals, the increased gifts become strikingly clear, and they help us to better “know” our Creator:

We are made in God’s image physically.

Yes, God is Spirit, and He does not have flesh and bones as humans have but in order to help us better understand Him these statements are recorded in Scripture, speaking of God as having:

Eyes: “...The **eyes** of the Lord your God are always on it, from the beginning of the year to the very end of the year” (Deuteronomy 11:12).

Ears: “... And say thou unto the people, Sanctify yourselves against to morrow, and ye shall eat flesh: for ye have wept in the **ears** of the Lord...” (Numbers 11:18, KJV).

Mouth: “.... My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. With him will I speak **mouth** to mouth...” (Numbers 12:7,8, KJV).

Face: “But He said, “You cannot see My **face**; for no man shall see Me, and live” (Exodus 33:20).

Hands: “And Moses said to the people: “Remember this day in which you went out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of **hand** the Lord brought you out of this place” (Exodus 13:3).

Arm: “Know today that I do not speak with your children, who have not known and who have not seen the chastening of the Lord your God, His greatness and His mighty **hand** and His outstretched **arm**...” (Deuteronomy 11:2).

Back: “Then I will take away My hand, and you shall see My **back**; but My **face** shall not be seen” (Exodus 33:23).

Feet: “But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God’s throne; nor by the earth, for it is His **footstool**...” (Matthew 5:34,35).

Humans are flesh and bones, housing the *real person* — the soul — but we are endowed with the tools to think, to see, to hear, to speak, to walk, and to work with our hands. Throughout Scripture, we are told that God does these things, watching us, listening to us, speaking to us through His word.

We must be careful to reflect the nature of God in our **physical facial**

expressions, showing love, compassion, joy over the good things, grief over sin, and hope in our expectation of His blessings. **Our clothing** should silently speak our focus on modesty and our love of spiritual things rather than the flashy wealth of the world. “Time”, the measurement of “life” is the only thing we really have, and so it is vital that we **use our time wisely**, doing the work God would have us to do. In these ways, we can bear the spiritual image of our Father and our Brother, while living physically in this world.

We are made in God’s image mentally.

Unlike other living things of God’s creation, humans are made in His image mentally. Though animals can learn many things through persistent training, they cannot enter into God’s thought process as humans can. What an amazing thing, that He has formed our minds in such a way that we can actually, on a human-sized scale, enter into **His mind!** How is that?

By understanding what He has revealed of his mind in His Word and in His creation:

A. We see His greatness in every created thing, from the extreme of billions of light years in the expanse of the universe, to the millions of intricate cells that make up every living thing.

B. We see His power in His control of the billions of “stars” in the countless galaxies as they travel their designed path in the universe.

C. We see His love of order and design in the systematic way that everything operates. Scientists can predict when an eclipse will occur, or they can explain how the blood flows in our bodies, because everything in creation functions in an orderly way.

D. We see His love of color, beauty, and variety in the millions of shades of color used in every facet of creation, and in the endless shapes of trees, plants, flowers, and all the living creatures. What beauty this diversity adds to our world!

E. We see His love of sound and of music. Every living thing has a sound, and also a song! Listen to the birds, the crickets, the whales, to the hum of a preoccupied human. Everything has its own sound and its own song!

F. We see His love of smell in the countless fragrances of His creation. And we learn from the negative aromas: dying things, burning things, filthy things!

G. We see His love of taste. Not only do all the physical things contain endless varieties of “flavor” but our tongues are covered with “taste buds” so that we can enjoy the process of eating and nourishing our bodies.

H. We see His love of surprises in the unexpected. Tiny “Cosmos” flowers, for instance, are not “majestic” enough to demand anyone’s attention, but take a minute to look closely at their center: you’ll see many tiny perfectly-formed “stars” from which the flower gets its name! And did you know that God hid medicine inside the fleshy aloe leaves? Who, but God, could have planned such a thing as a caterpillar

spinning a cocoon for a bedroom and then, right on time, emerging as a splendidly dressed butterfly?

I. We feel His love of peace. This is one of the great needs of every soul, and God's recognition of that need and of the preciousness of peace when it is realized must have been responsible for the creation of twilight — that sweet, short time between the end of the day and the beginning of night when the birds sing a quiet, restful song and the night insects begin their soothing sounds.

We are made in God's image emotionally.

Check these passages of Scripture to see the many emotions that are God's, placed in humans who are "made in His image":

God is portrayed as feeling:

- A. **Anger:** Jeremiah 21:5
- B. **Laughter:** Psalm 37:13
- C. **Pleasure:** Psalm 35:27, 1 John 3:22
- D. **Weariness:** Isaiah 43:24
- E. **Jealousy:** Deuteronomy 32:21, 1 Corinthians 10:22
- F. **Hatred:** Zechariah 8:17
- G. **Delight:** Psalm 37:23,24
- H. **Love:** 1 John 3:10-23
- I. **Compassion:** Jeremiah 12:15
- J. **Gentleness:** Isaiah 40:11
- K. **Mercy:** Psalm 103:8
- L. **Pity:** Psalm 103:13
- M. **Rejoicing:** Zephaniah 3:17
- N. **Rest in His love:** Zephaniah 3:17
- O. **Joy with singing:** Zephaniah 3:17

The Scriptures do portray God as an emotional Being, with the full range of emotions that He has given to man. The difference is that God's emotions and their expressions are always pure and right, while often ours are warped and distorted by sin or selfishness.

The scriptures are filled with statements concerning God's reactions to man's behaviour. In fact, since the creation and the placing of man in the Garden to give him the choice between good and evil, **all of biblical history has been an accounting of man's reactions to God and of God's response to man.**

Do we really stop to consider the power placed in our hands, because of God's love for us? Do we realize that we — *insignificant humans* — can cause the very God of heaven to feel anger because of our actions? Do we consider whether our actions will bring joy to Him, whether we will be recipients worthy of His love?

It is a wonderful thing when our attitudes and actions toward God are good — when He can be “proud” of us, as a father is proud of his children — and when He can respond to us in a positive way. During these times, we can work together, accomplishing things and reaching goals far beyond our dreams.

But there are other times when we are a disappointment to God, when our vision is small or our faith is weak. How sad it must be to Him when He sees all He could do through us, and yet we don’t allow ourselves to be freely used in His hands. If there are tears in heaven, I think they must be God’s tears when He says, **“Yes, again and again they tempted God and *limited the Holy One of Israel*”** (Psalm 78:41). One of the saddest pictures in the Scriptures is found in Romans 10:21: **“All day long I have stretched out My hand to a disobedient and contrary people.”**

We are made in God’s image socially.

Because the nature of God is love, and love requires recipients as well as a return from those who are loved, Elohim — the Lord of Hosts, the Word, and the Holy Spirit — according to the account in Genesis 1, created humans in His image, as the object of His love. We are social beings, created to love God and to love our fellowman. In Christ we see the example of how we are to interact with each other, socially:

A. Though He was Heaven’s Perfection, He did not elevate Himself above humans (Matthew 8:20).

B. He loved the rich and the poor, the educated and the uneducated, the respected and the despised (Matthew 9:10-13).

C. He served those around Him. “Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd” (Matthew 9:35,36).

D. He sought the lost and taught them God’s message of Truth: “... go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand’”(Matthew 10:6,7).

E. He died in order to bring into existence His church, a new society of people who are identified as God’s children, the bride of Christ: “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock ... to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20:28).

F. This spiritual kingdom will make up the new social order in that perfect, eternal world that our Lord has gone to prepare for us (Revelation 21).

Humility and compassion would be choice words to describe Jesus’ attitude in life and His behaviour toward the humans around Him. We must learn to emulate Him in all things.

We are made in God's image spiritually.

Man is formed in God's image, mentally and emotionally, but especially is the spiritual part of man formed after the likeness of God. Unlike all other living beings of creation, man is not only a living body, but he is a dual being: a living soul, housed in mortal flesh.

The soul, the spiritual part of man, has close connection with **life** (James 2:26: **"The body without the spirit is dead."**), with the **mind** because the mind directs and molds the soul; yet the soul is neither the breath of life in the body nor the physical brain cells in the head. How do we know? Because animals have life and brain cells, but they are not living souls made in the image of God.

The soul is the real person, living in the physical body. It realizes good and evil, it responds to good and evil appeals, it has a conscience, it has the ability to understand spiritual values, it can envision the future with rewards and punishments.

The soul also has the ability to understand values, to recognize standards, to develop goals. Only man has this ability to sift through the good and bad, and to make his choices according to what has value. Only man can think and plan and work toward eternal blessings. Only man can believe and envision and hope. How wonderful are these blessings **"in His image"**!

God has given us the Bible as our guide for the total development of our spiritual life. He has given us the life of Christ as the persona of our spiritual life. **In every soul there is a great void that can only be filled with the presence of God, our Maker.**

And, according to Ecclesiastes 3:11, in every soul is another unbreakable link with the Creator: **"...He has put eternity in their hearts..."** Throughout the world and throughout time, humanity has lived with the expectation of a resurrection after death — of an eternity awaiting us.

God wanted a love-relationship with a like-minded being that would never end. And so, crowning all of His other gifts to man, He gave the supreme gift: Immortality! The gift is entrusted in our hands. What will we do with it?

Questions

1. When were the animals created?
2. According to paragraph one, how was everything in creation interrelated?
3. Within the _____ of every “kind” of creature are the genetic instructions for many various types. Humans cannot create new DNA information.
4. In the beginning, all animals and humans ate _____ (Genesis 1:29,30).
5. From where do plants draw their nourishment? What do animals eat? What do humans eat?
6. Human bodies were made of _____. Humans and animals are ultimately nourished from plants or animals that are first nourished from the dust of the earth. To what do plants, animals and humans decay when they die?
7. How are humans made in God’s image physically?
8. How are we made in His image mentally?
9. How are we made in His image emotionally?
10. How are we made in His image socially?
11. How are we made in His image spiritually?

God, the Father

Chapter Seven

Yes, Genesis 1:1 is our first introduction to the Godhead: **The Lord God, The Angel of the Lord (the Word of the Lord**, who was born in the flesh as Jesus Christ), and **the Spirit of God**. Throughout the Old Testament we read of **The Lord of Hosts** (Isaiah 14:24), and of **The Lord God** (Ezekiel 11:16). “**The Word of the Lord**” declares, “Thus says the **Lord God**”. Isaiah 48:16 is a prophecy spoken by the One Who was born as the Son, saying “**The Lord God and His Spirit** have sent **Me**.” The context naming “**The Lord God**” seems to be designating the One of the Godhead who became **The Father**. It is interesting, though, that *there are only eleven references* in the entire Old Testament in which God is referred to as the Father!

Deuteronomy 32:6: Do you thus deal with the Lord, O foolish and unwise people? Is He not your Father, who bought you? Has He not made you and established you? [Moses’ song to the Israelites]

2 Samuel 7:14: I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men. [God speaking to David, concerning Solomon.]

1 Chronicles 22:10: He shall build a house for My name, and he shall be My son, and I will be his Father; and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel forever. [God speaking to David, concerning Solomon.]

1 Chronicles 29:10: Therefore David blessed the Lord before all the assembly; and David said: “Blessed are You, Lord God of Israel, our Father, forever and ever.” [David, praising God before the Israelites.]

Psalms 89:26: He shall cry to Me, “You are my Father, My God, and the rock of my salvation.” [David’s cry to God.]

Isaiah 9:6: For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. [A prophecy of Christ.]

Isaiah 63:16: Doubtless You are our Father, though Abraham was ignorant of us, and Israel does not acknowledge us. You, O Lord, are our Father; our Redeemer from Everlasting is Your name. [Israel's cry to God.]

Isaiah 64:8: But now, O Lord, You are our Father; we are the clay, and You our potter; and all we are the work of Your hand. [Israel's cry to God.]

Jeremiah 3:19: But I said: "How can I put you among the children and give you a pleasant land, a beautiful heritage of the hosts of nations?" And I said: "You shall call Me, 'My Father,' and not turn away from Me." [God's statement to Israel.]

Malachi 1:6: "A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then I am the Father, where is My honor? And if I am a Master, where is My reverence?" says the Lord of hosts to you priests who despise My name. Yet you say, 'In what way have we despised Your name?'" [God's statement to Israel.]

Malachi 2:10: Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously with one another by profaning the covenant of the fathers? [Malachi's statement to Israel.]

In contrast, throughout the New Testament, we find literally **HUNDREDS** of references to **The Lord of Hosts** as "**Father**". What does this marked difference tell us?

Let's allow the revealed word of God provide the answer. As we have already noted, Elohim — the eternal three Persons of the Godhead — shared in the work of Creation. But Revelation 13:8 tells us something that was planned even before the creation of humans: "**All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.**" In God's omniscience, He knew that the humans He would be making in His own image would choose to disobey Him. Sin would create a wall of separation which man, alone, would be unable to remove.

This ultimate creation — man, made like God in every attribute possible — was to be the object and recipient of Elohim's immeasurable love. It would seem that God had two choices: **Seeing sin come into the creation's life, God could have chosen not to make humans.** The second choice: **Elohim would provide the means to remove the wall of separation** erected by sin between Himself and the pinnacle of His creation.

The choice was that the Word, according to Philippians 2:6,7, would lay aside His equality in the Godhead in order to be born as a human: "... who,

being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in **the likeness of men...**"

Hebrews 10:5: In fulfillment of prophecy: "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but **a body** You have prepared for **Me.**"

John 1:14: And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of **the only begotten of the Father**, full of grace and truth.

Hebrews 1:5,6: For to which of the angels did He ever say: "**You are My Son, today I have begotten You**"? And again: "**I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son**"? But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: "Let all the angels of God worship Him."

Hebrews 2:14-17: Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. ... Therefore, in all things **He had to be made like His brethren**, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

Further, we read in Galatians 4:4-7 just how this new "Father/Son" relationship developed between The Lord of Hosts and The Word: "**But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, 'Abba, Father!'** Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ."

It is obvious from reading these passages of Scripture that **the Father/Son relationship came into existence with the birth of The Word as Jesus Christ**. God is our Father because The Word emptied Himself of His equal status in the Godhead, being born of flesh as **the Firstborn Son of God** and Brother of humans and, now, **we also can be born as children of God!**

How Does the Birth Take Place?

As with the physical birth of a human, the Scriptures portray the spiritual birth as a new beginning. We read vivid words of description in Romans 6:3,4: "... **do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.**"

Romans 6:6-11: "... **our old man was crucified with Him**, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that **we shall**

also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

2 Peter 1:4b: “... through these you may be **partakers of the divine nature...**” What an amazing thought, that through this spiritual birth into our Lord’s Family, we become alive again spiritually and, from that time forward, are “partakers of divine nature”! We grow in the image of Christ, as is recorded in 2 Corinthians 3:18: “**But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.**”

How Does Becoming an Obedient Child Affect our Daily Lives?

Through this new Father/child relationship, our entire behavior in daily life is re-written. Romans 6:12,13 admonishes: “**Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.**”

We Are Born As Babies

There are situations in which the newly baptized person has had years of study and “connection” with the church before his actual submission to God. In such a case, the time of babyhood may be brief. But for most who have no real background in a study of Scripture, the “newborn” not only has much to learn but many changes to make in his attitude and actions. He will have sinful habits to give up, as he matures in his realization of what is forbidden to the Christian, and positive things will begin to shape his life. Sadly, in contrast, there are cases in which the “newborn” never grows past that infant stage, never applying to his life the things he hears in Bible classes and sermons.

The Corinthian church had this problem of spiritual immaturity, as recorded in 1 Corinthians 3:1-3: “**And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?**”

We Grow by Being Students of God’s Word

In order to grow properly, any student in any field must *desire* to grow, studying the “textbook” and letting it mold his thinking and behavior. Attending worship on the Lord’s day and the various Bible study periods is essential,

but a hunger for knowledge should prompt daily personal study. Life is short and there is much to learn! As Paul urged the young Timothy (2 Timothy 2:15): **“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”**

As We Study the Scriptures, We Become Imitators

We are taught, from the writings of the Apostle Paul **“Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ”** (1 Corinthians 11:1). And, as already quoted, in 2 Corinthians 3:18, we are **transformed into His image** as we look steadfastly into the mirror of His word.

In our Daily Life, We Can Look to Mature Christians as Examples

The living examples we see enable us to more easily shape our own lives. We are blessed when we have parents, grandparents, and mature Christians to whom we can look, seeing in them the visible “image” of Christ.

What is our reaction to tragedy? What do we do when our faith is challenged? How do we react to temptations of lukewarmness, indifference? What is our response to anger, injustice, false accusations, misunderstandings, temptations? How do we use our time? In all of these things, looking around at the example of older, more mature Christians can provide guidance so that we will avoid many pitfalls. On the other hand, if someone is wearing the name “Christian” and yet is living an uncommitted life, he is guilty of a double sin: of blaspheming the precious name he is wearing, and of leading astray those who are looking to him for an example.

We Must Also Be Fruitful

The Christian life is not lived for oneself alone. As parents we have the grave responsibility to rear our children in the faith. Ephesians 6:4 urges, **“... fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.”** It is imperative, also, that we share the message of the Gospel with others, with friends, neighbors, relatives, casual acquaintances. **“Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit”** (John 15:2). Salvation for souls through obedience to the Gospel was the plan developed by God before the foundation of the world. When Jesus was about to ascend to Heaven, after completing the sacrificial offering that made the salvation of sinful humans possible, He entrusted *that treasure* to His disciples, to Christians, **to us!** **“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature”** (Mark 16:15). Will we obey Him and bear fruit throughout the world? Or will we be pruned from the tree because of our spiritual laziness or cowardness?

Lifelong Faithfulness

No race is won until it is finished. Many begin the walk with Christ but allow the distractions and troubles of life to lead them back into the world.

Revelation 2:10b urges, “Be faithful **until death**, and I will give you the crown of life.” This is the goal, with the eternal promise, but spiritual perseverance through all the ups and downs of life is essential.

2 Peter 1:4-11: “... through these you may be **partakers of the divine nature**, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

“But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your **faith virtue**, to virtue **knowledge**, to knowledge **self-control**, to self-control **perseverance**, to perseverance **godliness**, to godliness **brotherly kindness**, and to brotherly kindness **love**. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.

“Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so **an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.**”

How Does God Deal with Us, as a Father?

It was through the emptying of the Word, and His birth into this world as the Son of God and the Son of man that the Father/child relationship actually became a reality for humanity. Hebrews 9:15 explains that, “... **He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.**” The forgiveness, the promises, the relationship with God were made possible for those under the Old Covenant as well as for those under the New Covenant, through the Sonship of Christ. Therefore, we can call God “our Father” because we can call Jesus “our Brother”.

In the Old Testament, we don’t read of any prayer being addressed to “our Father”. It was through Jesus’ own words that we have learned to pray, “**Our Father** in heaven, hallowed be Your name...” (Matthew 6:9).

Among Humans, What Establishes the Father/Child Relationship?

A child, born to an earthly father, will carry his father’s genetic/DNA identification. Genesis 1:26 tells us of our beginning: “**Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness...’**” In chapter six we analyzed the aspects in which humans reflect the image of God: we are intelligent, emotional, spiritual, and social beings. Unlike animals and every other living creature, in all of these ways humans can relate to God, according to His own plan. Why have humans in all cultures and throughout time worshiped God, or some “god” of their own imagination if they lost the knowledge of the true God? Because there is a hole in every human soul that cries out to be filled with its Father!

Father's Love

What are the elements of a father's relationship with his children? Even though God cares about everything He has created, throughout Scripture we see **His love** for humans stated and exemplified repeatedly. In chapter nine of our study, many verses will be quoted to show God's patience with those He loves; we see His grief over their abandonment of Him, and we hear His pleas for their return. Only immeasurable love could tolerate all of the pain humans have caused their Father by their sinful behaviour and their rejection of His love and bountiful gifts.

John 3:16,17: **"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved."**

Proverbs 15:9: **"The way of the wicked is an abomination unto the Lord: but He loveth him that followeth after righteousness."**

Isaiah 1:2: **"Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me."**

Throughout the Scriptures we see God's love for the obedient, and His grief over those of His children who turned away from Him. Repeatedly, as in the book of Judges, we see His willingness to forgive their rebellion, and all that He did to restore them as a nation. That love for His children continues through the sonship of Christians, through our brotherhood with Christ. Truly, His love reaches out with tenderness and strength.

He Guides and Molds

Psalms 7:9,10: **"Oh let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end; but establish the just: for the righteous God trieth the hearts and reins. My defence is of God, which saveth the upright in heart."**

Proverbs 2:6-10: **"For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of His mouth cometh knowledge and understanding. He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: He is a buckler to them that walk uprightly. He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of His saints. Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path. When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul..."**

Proverbs 15:29: **"The Lord is far from the wicked: but He heareth the prayer of the righteous."**

Proverbs 16:7-9: **"When a man's ways please the Lord, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him. Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues without right. A man's heart deviseth his way: but the Lord directeth his steps."**

Isaiah 41:10: “Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will **strengthen** you, yes, I will **help** you, I will **uphold you** with My righteous right hand.”

Isaiah 30:19-21: God “...will be very **gracious** to you at the sound of your cry; when He hears it, He will answer you. And though **the Lord gives you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction**, yet your teachers will not be moved into a corner anymore, but your eyes shall see your teachers. Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, ‘**This is the way, walk in it...**’”

As Christians, looking back in our lives, we can see the providential molding and guiding that God has done from day to day. As the passage in Psalm 7 says, He uses the challenges of life to try our hearts, and the “bread of adversity and the water of affliction” (Isaiah 30) are also tools to mold and shape us in righteousness and strength. We think of troubles as weapons of Satan to destroy us, but God uses them to develop our spiritual muscles! Without exercise, our physical bodies would be useless; without spiritual challenges and exercise, our souls will not grow in their relationship with the Father.

The closing statement in Revelation is our assurance that every word we need for our spiritual guidance in this life has been supplied. As we study it and store its treasures in our hearts, we are guided in the ways of righteousness. The warning is strong that we are not allowed to add to, or to change, God’s written word.

Revelation 22:18,19: “For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall **add unto** these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall **take away** from the words of the book of this prophecy, **God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.**”

He Corrects and Disciplines

Humans have a terrible record of rebelling against God. As a loving Father, His desire from the beginning was to have a close relationship with humans made in His image. With Adam and Eve, He walked in the garden in the cool of the day, blessing them with the sweetness of personal fellowship.

But humanity has often responded to God with perverseness, rebelling against Him and hardening their hearts to His pleas for faithfulness. That rejection resulted in the worldwide flood in Noah’s day. It often brought disaster on the children of Israel, in spite of the fact that God had chosen them as Abraham’s descendants to be the people through whom Christ would be born.

Over and over again, God used pain to correct and discipline those who were determined to rebel against Him:

Psalm 106:35-46: The Israelites “...were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works. And they served their idols: which were a snare unto

them. Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils, and shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan: and the land was polluted with blood.

“Thus were they defiled with their own works, and went a whoring with their own inventions. Therefore was the wrath of the Lord kindled against His people, insomuch that He abhorred His own inheritance. And He gave them into the hand of the heathen; and they that hated them ruled over them. Their enemies also oppressed them, and they were brought into subjection under their hand. Many times did He deliver them; but they provoked Him with their counsel, and were brought low for their iniquity.

“Nevertheless He regarded their affliction, when He heard their cry: and He remembered for them His covenant, and repented according to the multitude of His mercies. He made them also to be pitied of all those that carried them captives.”

Jeremiah 5:3: **“O Lord, are not thine eyes upon the truth? Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return.”**

Amos 4:6: **“‘Also I gave you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and lack of bread in all your places; yet you have not returned to Me,’ says the Lord.”**

Proverbs 3:11,12: **“My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord; neither be weary of his correction: For whom the Lord loveth He correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.”**

He Motivates through Goals

Throughout His word, God has warned of the consequences of disobedience, and He has held out to His children the promises of great blessings and happiness if they are faithful to Him. Sin, even in this physical world, causes hatred, disease, crime, punishment, and often results in premature death. In contrast, the natural result of following God’s guidance is the best that this life can offer, and the promise of eternity with God in the new heaven and new earth.

Isaiah 1:19,20: **“If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.”**

Isaiah 3:10,11: **“Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him: for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him: for the reward of his hands shall be given him.”**

Proverbs 3:5,6: **“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.”**

Isaiah 40:29-31: **“He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the**

young men shall utterly fall: But **they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.**"

He Rewards

Revelation 2:2-7: **"I know your works,** your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary.

"Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place — unless you repent.

"But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. **To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God."**

Revelation 21:1-7: **"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth:** for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

"And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and **there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.**

"And He that sat upon the throne said, 'Behold, I make all things new.' And He said unto me, 'Write: for these words are true and faithful.' And He said unto me, 'It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. **I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son."**

Revelation 22:14: **"Blessed are they that do His commandments,** that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."

God has made the final promise: eternity with Him for all who are faithful until death. He calls, molds, guides, corrects, and holds out rewards to His children — but we are free moral agents, and we decide whether to cling to Him or not.

Questions

1. Is God addressed as “Our Father” throughout the Old Testament?
2. In the Old Testament, this Person of the Godhead is usually called _____. _____.
3. Who, in the Godhead, subjected Himself to being born as a human, as the “firstborn Son of God”?
4. According to Hebrews 1:5,6, when did the Word become “the Son of God”?
5. According to Romans 6:3,4, how do humans today become children of God?
6. Our burial in baptism pictures what?
7. When we are born into God’s Family through faith, repentance, and baptism, we become partakers of _____ nature (2 Peter 1:4).
8. As Christians, we are to be faithful and fruitful — bringing other souls to God. What was Jesus’ final command to His followers? (Mark 16:15)
9. Among humans, what establishes the Father/Child relationship?
10. Discuss ways in which God molds and shapes us in the Father/Child relationship.

Quotes from Hurting People

Chapter Eight

The average Christian would be very hesitant to make accusations against God, fearful of being judged as blaspheming his Creator. Of course there are times when disaster strikes or a hurting person's endurance is gone, and questions may scream from the heart almost involuntarily. How does God hear such cries of question or accusation or even blame? Is there automatic condemnation?

Searching through the Scriptures, we must be amazed at how many times words of hurt and challenge are recorded, *by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit*, for students of God's word to read. Were the context, the words, and God's response recorded for our enlightenment in our own lives?

When Moses was tasked with leading the Israelites out of Egypt, he reached the breaking point at times. Estimates say that there might have been as many as three million people, besides all the livestock, and as recorded in Exodus 17:3,4, when they reached Rephidim in the Wilderness of Sin, there was no water. The people were ready to revolt. They demanded, **"Why is it you have brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?"**

Evidently, in their extreme thirst, they had forgotten the miracles wrought throughout Egypt to free them. The parting of the Sea for their deliverance and the slaughter of the enemy army were no longer in their thoughts. At this point, they had turned away from faith in God and were defiant. Why had God brought them into such a desperate situation?

Moses cried out to God, saying, **"What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me!"** In response, God told him to strike the rock in Horeb, promising that water would come out, and it did.

But was there purpose in this trial? God explained to Moses, **"... that I may test them, whether they will walk in My law or not"** (Exodus 16:4).

Of course, God *knew* already what they would do, but their behaviour was the testimony to *themselves*, that they were continually ready to rebel and turn their backs on the Lord.

Throughout Israel's history, the worship of idols was practiced, along with the worship of God (Amos 5:25-27). This brought correction and punishment, finally ending in the Babylonian captivity for the two tribes that comprised "Judah". Jeremiah was the prophet God sent to warn them of what was coming if they did not repent. After the time of captivity began, Jeremiah — the weeping prophet — groaned his pain over what they were enduring, often crying out to God and asking why there was no answer:

Jeremiah 8:18-22: "I would comfort myself in sorrow; my heart is faint in me. Listen! The voice, the cry of the daughter of my people from a far country: 'Is not the Lord in Zion? Is not her King in her?'" (Judah)

"Why have they provoked Me to anger with their carved images — with foreign idols?" (God)

"The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved!" (Judah)

"For the hurt of the daughter of my people I am hurt. I am mourning; astonishment has taken hold of me. Is there no balm in Gilead, is there no physician there? Why then is there no recovery for the health of the daughter of my people?" (Jeremiah)

Jeremiah 14:17,18: "Let my eyes flow with tears night and day, and let them not cease; for the virgin daughter of my people has been broken with a mighty stroke, with a very severe blow. If I go out to the field, then behold, those slain with the sword! And if I enter the city, then behold, those sick from famine! Yes, both prophet and priest go about in a land they do not know." (Jeremiah)

Finally, Jeremiah became so disheartened with the punishment his people were suffering and with the rejection he was constantly facing from those same people in their derision of himself and his prophetic message that he turned to God with an accusation:

Jeremiah 20:7-9: "O Lord, You induced me, and I was persuaded; You are stronger than I, and have prevailed. I am in derision daily; Everyone mocks me. For when I spoke, I cried out; I shouted, 'Violence and plunder!' Because the word of the Lord was made to me a reproach and a derision daily.

"Then I said, 'I will not make mention of Him, nor speak anymore in His name.' But His word was in my heart like a burning fire shut up in my bones; I was weary of holding it back, and I could not."

Jeremiah is also believed to have been the one inspired by the Holy Spirit to write the book of Lamentations. In chapter 3:1-18, the prophet lays these charges against God:

"I am the man who has seen affliction by the rod of His wrath. He has led me and made me walk in darkness and not in light. Surely He has turned His hand

against me time and time again throughout the day. He has aged my flesh and my skin, and broken my bones. He has besieged me and surrounded me with bitterness and woe. He has set me in dark places like the dead of long ago. He has hedged me in so that I cannot get out; He has made my chain heavy. Even when I cry and shout, He shuts out my prayer. He has blocked my ways with hewn stone; He has made my paths crooked. He has been to me a bear lying in wait, like a lion in ambush. He has turned aside my ways and torn me in pieces; He has made me desolate. He has bent His bow and set me up as a target for the arrow. He has caused the arrows of His quiver to pierce my loins. I have become the ridicule of all my people — their taunting song all the day. He has filled me with bitterness, He has made me drink wormwood. He has also broken my teeth with gravel, and covered me with ashes. You have moved my soul far from peace; I have forgotten prosperity. And I said, ‘My strength and my hope have perished from the Lord.’”

Would we dare to make such accusations against God, blaming Him for whatever trials we might be facing? Of course, Jeremiah had been especially chosen to be a prophet during this critical time. In chapter 1:5 the Word of the Lord came to him saying, **“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; Before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations.”**

We see from these words that Jeremiah’s life was not the norm. From the earlier quote in chapter 20, he says that God had prevailed in his life, not because of Jeremiah’s choice but because God was stronger than he was! The entire book of Jeremiah and then of Lamentations is a story of abuse from all sides and of internal conflict. Our conclusion must be that Jeremiah’s pain was necessary in order for him to properly speak God’s message to a disobedient people, and that God’s strength enabled him to endure whatever was put on him.

Even though we are not “forced” by God’s overwhelming strength to live a life of dedication and perhaps of hardship for Him, we can learn from Jeremiah’s ultimate conclusions (1) that there will be pain until we repent, as was the case with Judah, and (2) that, regardless of what we endure in life, we must never lose faith in God, because ultimately His mercy and compassion will be our strength if we are faithful. Challenges, supported by faith, are tools that build spiritual strength. Waiting in patience to see the whole picture is vital.

Lamentations 5:19-22: “You, O Lord, remain forever; Your throne from generation to generation. Why do You forget us forever, and forsake us for so long a time? Turn us back to You, O Lord, and we will be restored; renew our days as of old, unless You have utterly rejected us, and are very angry with us!”

“Through the Lord’s mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. ‘The Lord is my portion,’ says my soul, ‘therefore I hope in Him! The Lord is good to those who wait for Him, to the soul who seeks Him. It is good that one should hope and wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord’” (Lamentations 3:22-26).

Other inspired writers of the Old Testament also penned their pain and grief. We can conclude from our reading that even God's chosen spokesmen (1) were not protected from having to endure trial and hardship, and (2) they openly cried to Him of their feelings of despair, abandonment, and their bewilderment over His silence. God was tolerant of their cries of pain and even preserved their words in the inspired record for our knowledge.

Habakkuk 1:2-4: "O Lord, how long shall I cry, and You will not hear? Even cry out to You, 'Violence!' and You will not save. Why do You show me iniquity, and cause me to see trouble? For plundering and violence are before me; there is strife, and contention arises. Therefore the law is powerless, and justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous; therefore perverse judgment proceeds."

Psalm 22:1,2: "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me, and from the words of My groaning? O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear; and in the night season, and am not silent."

Job 16:11-22: "God has delivered me to the ungodly, and turned me over to the hands of the wicked. I was at ease, but He has shattered me; He also has taken me by my neck, and shaken me to pieces; He has set me up for His target, His archers surround me. He pierces my heart and does not pity; He pours out my gall on the ground. He breaks me with wound upon wound; He runs at me like a warrior. I have sewn sackcloth over my skin, and laid my head in the dust. My face is flushed from weeping, and on my eyelids is the shadow of death; although no violence is in my hands, and my prayer is pure."

"O earth, do not cover my blood, and let my cry have no resting place! Surely even now my witness is in heaven, and my evidence is on high. My friends scorn me; my eyes pour out tears to God. Oh, that one might plead for a man with God, as a man pleads for his neighbor! For when a few years are finished, I shall go the way of no return."

In reading these heart-rending cries of hurting people, we need to remember two things:

(1) God is often "blamed" for troubles in our lives, for which He is not actually responsible. Some of our pain comes from the consequences of bad decisions we have made. Some of it is the result of the bad decisions of others that reach into our own lives. Some of it happens because we live in a broken world where many painful things come "happenstance" to both good and bad people.

(2) If God built a wall around His faithful and made everything in their lives "good", we would miss many of the challenges that actually help us to grow in faith and knowledge of His works. It is through endurance that we grow stronger, and it is as we look back on our lives and see how God has kept His promise that **"all things work together for good to those who love God"** (Romans 8:28), that we are able to walk forward by faith with greater assurance.

Questions

1. Do even dedicated Christians sometimes endure such hurts that they cry out in question to God?
2. The words of hurt and challenge, spoken by humans, and recorded in Scripture were included by the _____ of the _____.
3. According to God's answer to Moses in Exodus 16:4, God sent challenges on Israel so that they would see their rebellion as a result of the _____.
4. In Jeremiah 8:18-22, Jeremiah, speaking for Judah, questioned if the Lord was still with them. In God's answer, what did He accuse them of doing continuously?
5. In chapter 20, how did Jeremiah complain to God?
6. Are any of us "forced" by God's overwhelming strength to serve Him?
7. According to Lamentations 3:22-26, the Lord is good to whom?
8. As we read the writings of Old Testament prophets, we can conclude two things: (first paragraph, page 68).
9. Job said, "I was at ease..." but _____."
10. What are two things we can learn from the cries of hurting people?

Quotes from God

Chapter Nine

We have looked at quotes from humans, quotes preserved for us in God's written word, quotes that show despair, bewilderment, trust, joy, expectation ... all the emotions we experience at one time or another in our journey with God. These quotes are assurance to us that we are not the only ones who have felt these emotions, and the fact that they have been preserved in God's word for our reflection show us that the Lord is patient with our weaknesses and impatience.

In this lesson, we want to imprint deeply in our souls a range of the many statements that God has spoken to us about Himself in that same inspired book. We will read of His omnipresence, His omnipotence, His omniscience — and also statements that reveal His response to humans: statements of joy, of anger, of grief, even of His heart “churning” because of our behaviour, that our faithlessness affects Him as a “crushing” thing.

It is almost beyond our comprehension that *a human* — one dot of miniscule life, compared to the Almighty One who created everything that exists — could have any effect on that Eternal Entity, but God's own words declare that what we say and do impacts Him because of His great love for us. Why would that love be so all-pervading? Reflect a moment: a human gives his greatest treasure only to the one he loves the most.

What has God given to us? As we have already seen, Elohim created us in His own image, giving us the abilities to relate to Him as children to their father; beyond that, He has given us the ultimate gift of immortality — never-ending life from Himself! And, in order to erase sin from our lives, The Lord of Hosts and the Word provided the sacrifice necessary to save us: the birth of **the Word as the Son of God and the Brother of man**, and His death in our stead. The enormity of this greatest gift is also a measure of the depth of love God has for every human who has ever lived.

So why is the Bible also filled with records of punishment for humans, by the very Hand that brought them into existence? It is not for lack of love on God's part, but because humans erect a wall of sin between themselves and God, because humans turn their backs on Him and choose to follow Satan instead. If the

evil that permeates the world as a result brings grief to our hearts, we can only imagine the depth of pain God feels!

Jeremiah 23:23,24: “Am I a God near at hand,” says the Lord, “And not a God afar off? Can anyone hide himself in secret places, So I shall not see him?” says the Lord; **“Do I not fill heaven and earth?”** says the Lord.

Proverbs 15:3: “The eyes of the Lord are in **every place**, Keeping watch on the evil and the good.”

Zechariah 4:10b: “They are the eyes of the Lord, which **scan to and fro throughout the whole earth.**”

Habakkuk 2:20: “...the Lord is in His holy temple. Let all the earth keep silence before Him.”

Jeremiah 16:10-13: “And it shall be, when you show this people all these words, and they say to you, ‘Why has the Lord pronounced all this great disaster against us? Or what is our iniquity? Or what is our sin that we have committed against the Lord our God?’ then you shall say to them, ‘Because your fathers have forsaken Me,’ says the Lord; ‘they have walked after other gods and have served them and worshiped them, and have forsaken Me and not kept My law. And you have done worse than your fathers, for behold, each one follows the dictates of his own evil heart, so that no one listens to Me. Therefore I will cast you out of this land into a land that you do not know, neither you nor your fathers; and there you shall serve other gods day and night, where I will not show you favor.’”

Ezekiel 6:9b: “... I was **crushed** by their adulterous heart which has departed from Me, and by their eyes which play the harlot after their idols...”

Hosea 11:8: “How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I set you like Zeboiim? **My heart churns** (“turns over”) within Me; My sympathy is stirred.”

Psalm 78:21,22,40,41: “Therefore the Lord heard this and was **furious**; So a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also came up against Israel, **because they did not believe in God**, and did not trust in His salvation.

“How often they **provoked Him** in the wilderness, and **grieved Him** in the desert! Yes, again and again they **tempted** God, and **limited** the Holy One of Israel.”

Psalm 95:6-11: “Oh come, let us worship and bow down; Let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand. Today, if you will hear His voice: ‘Do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion, as in the day of trial in the wilderness, when your fathers **tested** Me; They **tried** Me, though they saw My work.’ For forty years I was **grieved** with that generation, and said, ‘It is a people who go astray in their hearts, and they do not know My ways.’ So I swore in My **wrath**, ‘They shall not enter My rest.’”

Psalm 7:9-11: “Oh, let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end, but establish the just; For the righteous God **tests** the hearts and minds. My defense is of God, Who saves the upright in heart.”

Jeremiah 42:18a: “For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: ‘As **My anger** and **My fury** have been poured out on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so will My fury be poured out on you...”

Habakkuk 2:18,19: “What profit is the image, that its maker should carve it, the molded image, a teacher of lies, that the maker of its mold should trust in it, to make mute idols? Woe to him who says to wood, ‘Awake!’ to silent stone, ‘Arise! It shall teach!’ Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver, yet in it there is no breath at all.

“Therefore as the fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the chaff, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust: because **they have cast away the law of the Lord of Hosts**, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel” (Isaiah 5:24).

“Hear the word of the Lord, you rulers of Sodom; give ear to the law of our God, you people of Gomorrah: ‘To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to Me?’ says the Lord.

“I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed cattle. I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs or goats. When you come to appear before Me, Who has required this from your hand, to trample My courts? Bring no more futile sacrifices; incense is an abomination to Me. The New Moons, the Sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies — **I cannot endure iniquity** and the sacred meeting. Your New Moons and your appointed feasts My soul **hates**; They are a trouble to Me, I am **weary** of bearing them.

“‘When you spread out your hands, **I will hide My eyes from you**; even though you make many prayers, **I will not hear**. Your hands are full of blood. **Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes. Cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, rebuke the oppressor; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow.**

“‘Come now, and let us reason together,’ says the Lord, ‘Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool. **If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured by the sword;** for the mouth of the Lord has spoken”’ (Isaiah 1:10-20).

Exodus 20:1-17: “And God spoke all these words, saying: ‘I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image — any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down

to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who **hate** Me, but showing **mercy** to thousands, **to those who love Me and keep My commandments.**'

"You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.'

"Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you. You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's.'"

Zechariah 8:14-17: "For thus says the Lord of hosts: 'Just as I **determined** to punish you when your fathers provoked Me to **wrath**,' says the Lord of hosts, 'and I would not relent, so again in these days I am determined to do good to Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. Do not fear.'

"These are the things you shall do: Speak each man the truth to his neighbor; give judgment in your gates for truth, justice, and peace; let none of you think evil in your heart against your neighbor; and do not love a false oath. for all these are things that I **hate**,' says the Lord."

Zechariah 8:21,23: "The inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, 'Let us continue to go and pray before the Lord, and seek the Lord of hosts.'

"Thus says the Lord of hosts: 'In those days ten men from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man, saying, "Let us go with you, for we have heard that **God is with you.**"'

Joel 2:12,13: "Now, therefore," says the Lord, "**Turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning. So rend your heart, and not your garments; return** to the Lord your God, for He is **gracious** and **merciful, slow to anger**, and of great **kindness**; and He **relents** from doing harm.

Hosea 4:2,3;11-13: "By swearing and lying, killing and stealing and committing adultery, they break all restraint, with bloodshed upon bloodshed. Therefore the land will mourn; and everyone who dwells there will waste away with the beasts of the field and the birds of the air; even the fish of the sea will be taken away.

"Harlotry, wine, and new wine enslave the heart. My people ask counsel from their wooden idols, and their staff informs them. For the spirit of harlotry

has caused them to stray, and they have played the harlot against their God. They offer sacrifices on the mountaintops, and burn incense on the hills, under oaks, poplars, and terebinths, because their shade is good. Therefore your daughters commit harlotry, and your brides commit adultery.

“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will **reject** you from being priest for Me; because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will **forget** your children.”

Hosea 6:4: “O Ephraim, **what shall I do to you?** O Judah, what shall I do to you? For your faithfulness is like a morning cloud, and like the early dew it goes away.”

Hosea 7:13,14: “**Woe** to them, for they have **fled** from Me! **Destruction** to them, because they have **transgressed** against Me! **Though I redeemed them, yet they have spoken lies against Me.** They did not cry out to Me with their heart when they wailed upon their beds.”

1 Chronicles 29:17: “I know also, my God, that You **test** the heart and have **pleasure** in uprightness.”

Nehemiah 9;28,30,31,33: Concerning the history of God’s dealings with the children of Israel: “... **Yet when they returned and cried out to You, You heard from heaven; and many times You delivered them according to Your mercies...** Yet for many years You had **patience** with them, and testified against them by Your Spirit in Your prophets. ... in Your great **mercy** You did not utterly consume them nor forsake them; for You are God, **gracious and merciful.** ... However You are **just** in all that has befallen us; for You have dealt **faithfully...**”

Hosea 11:1-4; 7-9: “When Israel was a child, I **loved** him, and out of Egypt I called My son. As they called them, so they went from them; they sacrificed to the Baals, and burned incense to carved images.

“I taught Ephraim to walk, taking them by their arms; but they did not know that I healed them. I drew them with gentle cords, with bands of love, and I was to them as those who take the yoke from their neck. I stooped and fed them.

“How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I set you like Zeboiim? My heart CHURNS within Me; My sympathy is stirred. I will not execute the fierceness of My anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim. For I am God, and not man, the Holy One in your midst; and I will not come with terror.”

Throughout God’s word are promises of the New Heaven and the New Earth, populated with His obedient people, for whom He will make everything perfect. This passage in Isaiah 65:17-19; 24,25 speaks of the joy God plans for Himself and those who will inherit that Promised Land:

“For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I

create; for behold, I create Jerusalem as a rejoicing, and her people a joy. I will **rejoice** in Jerusalem, and **joy** in My people; the voice of weeping shall no longer be heard in her, nor the voice of crying. ... It shall come to pass that **before they call, I will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear.** ... They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain,' says the Lord."

If you have carefully read these statements made by God and recorded in His Scriptures through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, you have seen the many poignant words used to describe God's response to His people. We, in this blessed Christian age, need to listen to these words and realize that they are as applicable to us today as they were to the children of Israel when they were spoken.

No, it is not typical of us to carve idols and to worship them as they did, but how often do "things" or "goals" of this world become more important to us than God? And how often do we fall into overt transgression of His commands because of our weaknesses in the face of temptation? And how often, in our preoccupation with "life" do we fail to reach out passionately to those lost souls around us?

When we transgress, or when we fail, do these heart-rending words God has spoken about His response to His children ring in our ears and fill our hearts with remorse and repentance? And when we triumph over Satan through our complete devotion to God, do His words of His joy fill our own souls with happiness?

It is imperative that we, who are God's children in this present age, be continually conscious of the fact that our thoughts, our attitudes, even our most insignificant acts create a response in God Himself! **What power His love for us has given us, to be able to bring joy to His heart, or to crush Him with grief over our actions!** Let us always remember Zephaniah 3:17:

"The Lord your God in your midst,
The Mighty One, will save;
He will **rejoice** over you with **gladness**,
He will quiet you with His **love**,
He will **rejoice** over you with **singing**."

Questions

1. In Scripture we read of God's limitless power, His presence everywhere, his complete knowledge of all things past and future, but we also read statements of His response to _____.
2. What are two very expressive words used to show the negative effects of humans on God? (Ezekiel 6:9; Hosea 11:8).
3. If God loves us so much that He was willing to sacrifice His Son for us, why do we read so many records of punishment He has brought to humans?
4. According to Jeremiah 16:10-13, what was the great sin for which God was punishing the Israelites?
5. Can humans actually limit God (Psalm 78)?
6. According to Psalm 95, what did the the Israelites do to God for 40 years in the wilderness?
7. In Isaiah 1, what contrasts did God put before the people?
8. According to Hosea 4, what are some things that enslave the heart?
9. Even though we may not worship physical idols today, what are some "gods" that often supercede God in our hearts?
10. How do Hosea 11 and Zepheniah 3:17 describe God's attitude toward those who love and obey Him?

God's Dealings with Others

Chapter Ten

“In the beginning God...” (Genesis 1:1) That statement, when we fully understand its meaning, tells us a full account of everything both before the beginning of the measuring of “time” and in the beginning itself. As we have studied, Elohim — the Godhead: The Lord of Hosts, The Word, and the Holy Spirit — is **perfect, eternal, all-knowing and all-powerful**. Nothing is lacking in His entity, and He is the essence of goodness.

From His hands, only goodness comes. Genesis 1 continues with the account of creation. In verse ten, as the waters were separated and dry land appeared, we read, **“And God called the dry land Earth, and the gathering together of the waters He called Seas. And God saw that it was good.”**

Day after day, as the work of creation continued and God looked at His work, the statement is repeated, **“And God saw that it was good.”** Following the creation of the land animals and then crowning His work with the formation of man from the dust of the earth, we read in verse 31, **“Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.”**

So, if everything was perfect from the beginning, what was the key that allowed sin and evil to corrupt the creation? God didn't create robots, with no facility for thinking and no option to make choices. He gave “free will”, both to the spirit beings — angels — and to humans. Only goodness and obedience were placed before them, but *they could choose to disobey*.

The Angelic Host

God is called “The Lord of Hosts”. We don't have a record in Scripture of the actual creation of angels. We understand that they are immortal spirit beings. According to Revelation 5:11,12: **“Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and**

the number of them was **ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands**, saying with a loud voice: 'Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!'"

So, part of the privileged work of angels is to worship and praise God. Hebrews 1:14 tells us more about their responsibilities: "**Are they (angels) not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?**" Hebrews 13:2 warns, "**Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels.**"

How Did Evil Begin?

There are two Scriptures that seem to give insight in answer to this question. Ezekiel 28:12-15 is worded as a *lamentation* to the King of Tyre, who was so lifted up with pride that he pronounced himself to be a god. The passage tells of what had already happened to one who had wanted to exalt himself to be God: "**You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; ... You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; you were on the holy mountain of God; you walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones. You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you.**"

When we pay attention to the description of this one, we know that the description is not of the King because he was not in Eden and he had never been perfect. These words describe **the anointed cherub**, evidently the angelic being who was anointed by God to have authority over the angelic host.

A further reference that seems to show how evil began is found in Isaiah 14:12-14: "**How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.'** Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, to the lowest depths of the Pit."

In Revelation 12:7-9 we read about the war between Michael and Satan, with their angelic armies: "**And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.**"

These Scriptures are telling us that "the anointed cherub" had free will. He could choose to fill the exalted position given him by God, or he could allow himself to be led into rebellion by his pride and the desire to be greater than God. When he surrendered to pride's temptation, he fell into sin and became the evil force who would lead humans to sin in his war against God.

How will God deal ultimately with this rebellion on the part of Satan and his fallen angels?

Revelation 20:9b,10 describes the destination of Satan, his angelic host, and all those humans who die in rebellion against God : **“And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.”**

How Did God Deal with Adam and Eve?

Adam and Eve were the crown of God’s creation. They were perfect as they came from the hands of God, but they, too, were given free will. The Scriptures do not say how long they lived in the Garden of Eden, perfect, and obedient to God, enjoying those walks together with Him in the cool of the evening (Genesis 3:8) but Genesis 3:1-7 tells of Eve’s encounter with Satan: **“Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, ‘Has God indeed said, “You shall not eat of every tree of the garden”?’ And the woman said to the serpent, ‘We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, “You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.”’**

“Then the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.’ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.”

1 John 2:15-17 warns that we, today, can fall to the same temptations: **“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world — the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life — is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.”**

God had blessed these first humans with everything, including face-to-face fellowship with him. He had provided the Tree of Life, so that they could eat of its fruit and live forever. His only restriction was to deny them the right to eat of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. When Eve (and Genesis 3:6 says that Adam was right there with her, and he didn’t provide the husbandly leadership that was his responsibility), ate of the fruit and gave some to Adam, did God excuse them with, “Oh, they are young and innocent. They will learn to obey Me!”?

No. They knew Him face-to-face; with even that depth of knowledge of Him, they chose to disobey, so God removed them from the Garden and from

access to the Tree of Life. With their knowledge of good and evil, He knew they and their descendants would make wrong choices throughout life.

The result is the broken world in which we live. We need to learn from God's dealings with Adam and Eve. His commands are real, and He will do what He says in response to our actions. In mercy, He has provided the way for us to be forgiven of our sins, when we turn to Him in obedience and become His children, reconciled to Him through the blood of Christ. Unless we choose that path, ostracism from His presence for eternity is the consequence.

The People of Noah's Day

Genesis 6:11,12 tells of the terrible state of humanity during the days of Noah: **"The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. So God looked upon the earth, and indeed it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth."**

Looking at the sin and corruption in our culture today, many wonder if things have gotten so bad that the Lord will return soon. These verses say that the earth was filled with violence and that everyone was living a life of corruption. As bad as it may seem now, there are millions yet who are trying to live good lives, and there are many who are searching for the truth. We cringe at the horrors we hear and see, but we have not yet reached that irredeemable state that prevailed in the lifetime of Noah.

Even with all the evil, we see God's patience as He waited for one hundred and twenty years while the ark was being built and Noah was warning the people of the disaster to come. God had said, **"My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years"** (Genesis 6:3). **By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith** (Hebrews 11:7).

In 2 Peter 2:5 we read a summary of God's judgments against those who were evil beyond redemption. Yes, He did bring the worldwide flood, and every living thing on the earth perished except for the eight souls in the ark and the animals with them. God does not voice empty threats. What He promises, He will do. It is our choice to obey or to disobey.

"For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly; and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly; and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his

righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds) — then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment...” (2 Peter 2:4-9).

What will the world be like when the Lord returns? Matthew 24:36,37 explains: **“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.”**

None of us would want to live in that kind of violent, godless world. **“Even so, come, Lord Jesus!”** (Revelation 22:20).

World-wide Change after Babel

Noah’s third son was Ham. One of Ham’s sons was named Cush. Cush’s son was **“... Nimrod; he began to be a mighty one on the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord; therefore it is said, ‘Like Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord.’ And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. From that land he went to Assyria and built Nineveh, Rehoboth Ir, Calah, and Resen between Nineveh and Calah (*that is the principal city*)** (Genesis 10:8-12).

We don’t know the population of the earth at that time, but lifespans were still lengthy and families were large. After the flood, God told Noah and his family, **“Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth”** (Genesis 9:1). Instead, according to Genesis 11, verses 1-4, **“Now the whole earth had one language and one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they dwelt there. Then they said to one another, ‘Come, let us make bricks and bake them thoroughly.’ They had brick for stone, and they had asphalt for mortar. And they said, ‘Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.’”**

Nimrod is listed as only the third generation from Noah and the great flood. How could he and his descendants have forgotten God’s harsh punishment on the world for its rebellion against Him? How could they have chosen to ignore the command that they were to scatter over the earth, to repopulate it? Again, under Nimrod’s leadership, human pride and the desire for power resulted in disobedience to God. They planned together to unite toward the goal of dwelling in one place and building a tower that would reach to the very heavens. Babel, with its tower, was the result. These people were the descendants of Shem, Ham and Japheth.

How did God deal with this new challenge to His authority? He used the most logical tool to accomplish what He had intended from the time Noah and his family left the ark. Elohim, the Godhead, said, **“‘Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech.’ So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the**

earth, and they ceased building the city. Therefore its name is called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of all the earth; and from there the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth” (Genesis 11:3,4).

The descendants of Japheth traveled north and west, settling in what is now north of the Middle East, and Europe. Ham’s line went south into Africa. Shem’s children populated the Middle East, and the north and northeast of that area. Because of the separation, by language and also by isolation of genetic pools, the different races developed and the separation of mankind by language, race, and tribal groups was begun. Those divisions continue to this day.

Abraham’s Descendants — The Chosen People

God’s plan from before the creation was to provide a Saviour to redeem those who would choose to love and obey Him. In order for that One to be born into the human family, the descendants of one who was called “the friend of God” were developed into a nation — the Israelites.

“Now the Lord had said to Abram: ‘Get out of your country, from your family and from your father’s house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed’” (Genesis 12:3).

Abraham’s descendants were brought together as a nation under the covenant of the “Law of Moses”. Sadly, as had been true of the history of humans, for some periods the Israelites would be faithful, and then the leadership would change and they would turn away from God, following the culture of the idolatrous nations around them. God raised up judges, prophets, and finally kings to help steer their course. Ultimately, the ten tribes were scattered by Assyrian conquest, which meant that people with a background knowledge of the true God were positioned with their communities and synagogues to receive the Gospel when it came to them! The dispersion, itself, became God’s tool!

The Gentiles Hear the Gospel

Throughout the Old Testament, contrary to the expectation of the Jews, God spoke of taking the message of salvation to the Gentiles. Even from the beginning of the covenant with Abraham, the promise was that through his descendants, **“... all the families of the earth shall be blessed”** (Genesis 12:3). In 2 Samuel 22:50, David concluded a song with these words: **“Therefore I will give thanks to You, O Lord, among the Gentiles, and sing praises to Your name.”**

In numerous prophecies spoken by Isaiah, Gentiles are included: Isaiah 11:10: **“And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse [Christ], Who shall stand as a banner to the people; for the Gentiles shall seek Him, and His resting place shall be glorious.”**

Isaiah 42:1: **“Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One in whom My soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles.”**

Isaiah 42:6: **“I, the Lord, have called You in righteousness, and will hold Your hand; I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people, as a light to the Gentiles, to open blind eyes...”**

Isaiah 66:18,19: **“For I know their works and their thoughts. It shall be that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come and see My glory [Pentecost, the establishment of the church]. ... I will set a sign among them; and those among them who escape [the resulting persecution] I will send to the nations:... to the coastlands afar off who have not heard My fame nor seen My glory. And they shall declare My glory among the Gentiles.”**

In Isaiah 2:2,3 we read a prophecy concerning the beginning of the church in Jerusalem, and the spreading of the message throughout the world: **“Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, ‘Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.’ For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.”**

Joel 2:28 promises: **“And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days.”**

In Daniel 2:44 we read: **“And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed...”**

This kingdom was the Lord’s church, established on the day of Pentecost, approximately A.D. 33 (Acts 2). We read in Acts 2:47, that **“... the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.”**

The Hope of the World

We are told in Revelation 13:8 that before the creation actually began, Jesus was **“...the Lamb, slain from the foundation of the world.”** Everything that God was doing throughout the Old Testament period of time was to bring history to the moment when the Word would lay aside His equality in the Godhead and would be born into the world as Jesus Christ, the Brother of man. Galatians 4:4-7 explains: **“But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, ‘Abba, Father’. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.”**

In the first century, following the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, and the establishment of the long-prophesied “kingdom of God”, the message of salvation was proclaimed throughout the whole world. To the church, Paul said in Romans 1:8, **“First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.”** Colossians 1:3-6 echoes this truth, **“We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints, for the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel; which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth...”**

With the blessing of knowing the Gospel comes also the responsibility in every generation to take that message to every soul on the earth. God has entrusted His most precious gift in our hands. What will we do with it?

Questions

1. Of what three Persons does Elohim — the Godhead — consist?
2. Even though everything was perfect at the time of creation, what option did God allow humans to have?
3. When was the angelic host created?
4. How did evil begin?
5. Why is it not correct to conclude that Ezekiel 28:12-15 is describing the king of Tyre?
6. What does Isaiah 14:12-14 say that corroborates the passage in Revelation 12:7-9?
7. According to 1 John 2:15-17, humans are tempted in what three ways today?
8. Why did God bring the flood of waters over the whole earth in Noah's day?
9. God established the nation of Israel as His chosen people in order that _____ could be born into the world through them.
10. What privilege and responsibility has God entrusted to Christians?

Working Providentially

Chapter Eleven

Have you considered the various ways God works in day-to-day life throughout the world? Yes, it was through His miraculous creative power that the universe and everything we know were brought into existence, but following the fall of Adam and Eve, and even further, in the effects and aftermath of Noah's world-wide flood, **God set in motion the laws of nature.** Looking at the curses placed on humans and the serpent as the result of the sin of Adam and Eve, I wonder if the world itself was initially preserved in its glorious state of original creation, with none of the natural disasters that plague us today? There is the belief that a water canopy surrounding the earth shielded it from the sun's direct rays and that this, and other factors, enabled humans to live those very long lives before the flood.

Certainly, we can see from the effects of the flood that the entire surface of the earth — not just a few inches down, but for tremendous depths — was broken, battered in turmoil, washed tremendous distances and laid down layer on layer. Looking from that standpoint, the world in which we live is nothing like the one Adam and Eve encountered when they walked away from Eden. Surely, even Noah and his family, when they left the ark, could hardly identify their new world with the one they had previously known.

The conclusion would be that the original "laws of nature" were greatly affected by the aftermath of the flood so that, now, hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, volcanoes, floods, droughts, and other crises are a part of the "norm". When a natural disaster wreaks havoc, it is not that God is *directly* causing that horror; rather, **the broken laws of nature are responsible.** We do live in a broken world.

The Use of Miracles

From an exhaustive study of Scripture, we can see that in various situations, God set aside the natural laws and made changes through "miracles".

What is a miracle? It is the raising of a dead person back to life (1 Kings 17;17-23), the immediate curing of a disease (Matthew 8:1-4), the stilling of a violent storm (Mark 4:39), interpretation of dreams, prophecies of things to come (Genesis 41), and any other immediate *setting aside of the natural laws*. **The purpose of miracles was to confirm the authenticity of the speaker, as one sent by God, and to validate his message.**

In the Old Testament, we see that some of the prophets did perform miracles, but some did not, as was the case with Jeremiah, Samuel, David, Solomon, Nehemiah, Ezra, and others.

In the New Testament, John the Baptizer preached a powerful message of repentance, but there is no record of miracles. When Jesus began His work, He continually confirmed both His message and Himself as the Son of God through the authority of His teachings and the miracles He performed. He empowered His chosen disciples, also, to heal the sick as they went about preaching the coming of the Kingdom. On the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was poured out on the Apostles, their message was inspired by God. In the continuation of their preaching, they confirmed the authenticity of their words by performing miracles, as Jesus had promised in Mark 16:17,18: **“And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.”**

Contrary to the claims of some today, that miracles are still being performed by people of faith, when we pay attention to the biblical account we will see that miracles ceased when their purpose had been fulfilled. Acts 3 tells of miracles of healing being done by the Apostles. In chapter 5, verse 12, we read, **“And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people.”** Though thousands had obeyed the Gospel, and had been born anew through the waters of baptism and the giving of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38), **only the Apostles were empowered to perform miracles.**

In Acts 6:6, seven men, **“full of the Holy Ghost”** (verse 3, from their baptism, but not empowered by Him to preach by inspiration or to perform miracles), were chosen by the Apostles to help with their ministry. The record says that these were **“set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them.”** As a result, we read in verse 8 that these men were now able to do miracles. How did that happen? **The Apostles had been given the power by God to enable chosen ones to do miracles.**

The question arises: **Were those on whom the Apostles laid their hands able to lay hands on others, and to give them miraculous power, and so on down the line to today?** We can learn the answer to that question by reading further in the book of Acts. In chapter 8, Philip [one of the seven on whom the Apostles had laid hands and had given the power to do miracles, Acts

6:5] went to Samaria to preach the Gospel. “**And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed. And there was great joy in that city**” (Acts 8:6,7). People had responded to the Gospel, so the promise of Acts 2:38 was kept: “**Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.**” But, as with the converts on the day of Pentecost, **the gift of the Holy Spirit was the revitalizing of their souls before God; it did not give them the power to do miracles.**

But Philip had begun a new congregation of the Lord’s church. When he moved on, they would have no written Scripture (the New Testament) to guide them, and they would have no spiritually mature leadership, so what were they to do?

Did **Philip**, through the power of the Holy Spirit, solve the problem by laying hands on some of the new converts and enabling them to receive miraculous gifts of preaching, prophesying, healing, and speaking in languages they had not studied, etc. (1 Corinthians 14)? **No.** Verses 14-17 of Acts 8 show that **Peter and John** came to Samaria, and that it was, again, through *their* prayers and the laying on of these *two Apostles’ hands* that the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit were given. This was done repeatedly as the message of salvation spread throughout the world through the preaching of the converts and through the follow-up of the Apostles. We read in Romans 1:11, in the Apostle Paul’s letter to the church, that he longed to come to Rome, “**... that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established.**” From these words, we understand that no Apostle had yet visited the church in Rome, and that none of the Christians there had miraculous gifts.

In the infancy of the church, before the writing of the New Testament was completed, these spiritual gifts were necessary so that only the true and inspired message of God would be preached. As the Gospel accounts were written and circulated, as the letters to the churches were written, and as the entire New Testament was **completed** and **confirmed to be the word of God** through the miraculous deeds done by those who were doing the writing, **the need for miracles ceased.** Preachers and teachers could show a “thus saith the Lord” for their messages, as proof that what they were teaching was the truth. By that time the Apostles had died, and those who had been given miraculous gifts were also at the end of their lives, **so the “miraculous age” ended.**

In anticipation of this dramatic change, Paul had written in 1 Corinthians 13:8-10: “**Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues [languages, unstudied by the speakers], they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away.** For we know in part

and we prophesy in part. But **when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.**"

What was Paul saying? That the miraculous gifts were "in part", that is, not everyone in the church had a gift, making them totally dependent on others for their spiritual guidance. He said that the gifts would cease when **"that which is perfect has come..."** Some have said that the "perfect" refers to the second coming of Christ, but this is a misunderstanding of the passage. It says "that", not "who", so the reference is to a "thing". The only perfect "thing" in this world is the inspired word of God, the New Testament, under the new covenant sealed by the blood of our Lord. We know, also, that this promise is not referring to the Lord's return and the end of the world, because Paul concludes with, **"And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love."** Faith and hope will be swallowed up in full knowledge and the completion of everything we've ever hoped for when Christ comes again!

With the end of the miraculous age, some deem us forsaken, feeling that God is sitting there on His throne in Heaven, just waiting for the time for the Lord to end all things. But that is not the picture we see when we pay close attention to the Scriptures.

Providence, the Tool Most Used by God

Not just now, but **throughout history**, God's primary way of involving Himself in the affairs of humans is through what we call "providence". What is the biblical concept of providence? It is God working behind the scenes, overruling *within the laws of nature* to bring about what He sees is best in a given situation. Often these instances are passed over as "happenstances" because God's direct involvement is not spelled out in the recording of the events. Even in our own lives, it is only by faith that we are confident He is keeping His promises and that He is the one who is working everything together for good (Romans 8:28).

As Christians, we can say that **we walk by faith as we look ahead**, but as we turn and **look back** to the yesterdays, **we walk by sight** because we can see the many times that this detail and that event and the opening or closing of doors brought about the things that were best — and often unexpected or planned by us!

Instances of Providential Working in the Scriptures

In Genesis 24 we read of Abraham sending his servant to his relatives in Haran, seeking a wife for his son Isaac. He said, **"I will make you swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and the God of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell; but you shall go to my country and to my family, and take a wife for my son Isaac"** (Genesis 24:3,4).

Reading further, in verses 7,8, Abraham said, **"The Lord God of heaven..."**

will send **His angel** before you, and you shall take a wife for my son from there.” Upon reaching Haran, the servant prayed (verses 12-15), “Then he said, ‘O Lord God of my master Abraham, please give me success this day, and show kindness to my master Abraham. Behold, here I stand by the well of water, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water. **Now let it be that the young woman to whom I say, “Please let down your pitcher that I may drink,” and she says, “Drink, and I will also give your camels a drink”— let her be the one You have appointed for Your servant Isaac. And by this I will know that You have shown kindness to my master.’** And it happened, before he had finished speaking, that behold, Rebekah, who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham’s brother, came out with her pitcher on her shoulder.”

Do we see a miracle here? Was the entire event just a “coincidence”? No, but there is tremendous evidence of the providence of God at work!

Reading further in Genesis 29, we see Jacob going to Haran to find a wife from among his relatives, one who would know of the true God of Heaven. At a well, he met men who had come to water their sheep. He asked where they were from, they answered, “Haran”, and then he asked about the welfare of his relative, Laban, the son of Nahor. *At that moment*, Rachel, Laban’s daughter, came to water their sheep! From there, the story develops that Jacob is taken to Laban’s home, eventually he marries Rachel and Leah, and out of these marriages come the twelve sons — fathers of the twelve tribes of Israel.

Do we see a miracle here? Was the entire event just a “coincidence”? No, but there is tremendous evidence of the providence of God at work!

We know the account of Joseph, one of Jacob’s sons, who was sold into slavery because of their jealousy. Later, when he was bought by Potiphar whose wife looked on him with lust, Joseph was imprisoned falsely. While in prison, he correctly interpreted dreams of Pharaoh’s butler and baker. When Pharaoh himself had puzzling dreams, the butler remembered Joseph and related the almost-forgotten fact that a prisoner had told him the meaning of a dream. So Pharaoh called for Joseph. The end result was that Joseph was made second in command throughout the entire country!

This history covered thirteen years, years in which many seemingly negative things ruled in Joseph’s life, and yet when a famine ensued and Joseph’s entire family was to be brought to Egypt to save them from starvation, he said to his brothers, **“God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt”** (Genesis 45:7,8).

Do we see a miracle here? Was the entire event just a “coincidence”?

No, but there is tremendous evidence of the providence of God at work!

In 1 Samuel 14:6-13 we read of King Saul's son, Jonathan, in a conflict with the Philistines: **"Jonathan said to the young man who bore his armor, 'Come, let us go over to the garrison of these uncircumcised; it may be that the Lord will work for us. For nothing restrains the Lord from saving by many or by few.'**

"So his armorbearer said to him, 'Do all that is in your heart. Go then; here I am with you, according to your heart.'

"Then Jonathan said, 'Very well, let us cross over to these men, and we will show ourselves to them. If they say thus to us, "Wait until we come to you," then we will stand still in our place and not go up to them. But if they say thus, "Come up to us," then we will go up. For the Lord has delivered them into our hand, and this will be a sign to us.'

"So both of them showed themselves to the garrison of the Philistines. And the Philistines said, 'Look, the Hebrews are coming out of the holes where they have hidden.' Then the men of the garrison called to Jonathan and his armorbearer, and said, 'Come up to us, and we will show you something.'

"Jonathan said to his armorbearer, 'Come up after me, for the Lord has delivered them into the hand of Israel.' And Jonathan climbed up on his hands and knees with his armorbearer after him; and they fell before Jonathan. And as he came after him, his armorbearer killed them."

Do we see a miracle here? Was the entire event just a "coincidence"? No, but there is tremendous evidence of the providence of God at work!

If we pay attention in our reading of the Scriptures, throughout the Old Testament and the New Testament, we will repeatedly see God's use of providence to bring together the right people at the right time and in the right situation to reach His ultimate goal.

Even in our own lives as Christians, yes, we walk by faith looking forward, but when we look back over the events in our lives, we can see God's providential work to bring about what was best, and to lead us forward in our walk with Him.

May His promise be embedded deeply in our hearts: **"Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.' So we may boldly say: 'The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?'"**

Having this promise, made by Elohim, Himself, we can rest in peace.

Questions

1. When Adam and Eve sinned and were driven from the Garden of Eden, what law did God set in motion?
2. Did the flood sweep gently over the earth, or can we see by the thousands of feet of layered deposits and buried fossils that the entire surface of the planet was torn up and re-laid?
3. When the original laws of nature were affected by the flood, what natural disasters became part of the “norm”?
4. What are the two ways God has worked with humanity?
5. Define “miracles”.
6. Define “providence”.
7. Often even Christians do not distinguish between the two methods of work. What was the purpose of miracles?
8. Has the miraculous age ended? Why?
9. When God works providentially today, are people wrong when they declare, “It was a miracle!!!” Should Christians just attribute the event to “coincidence” or “happenstance”?
10. Discuss some of the providential events recorded in Scripture. Look back on your own life and identify times of providential working in your life and the life of others.

What God Has Promised: What He Has Not Promised

Chapter Twelve

There are those who believe that God has promised to build a hedge around all those who obey Him. Therefore, as His children, they will be protected from every negative experience of humanity. He has not made such a promise.

When man sinned, the “law of nature” was also affected. Where, previously, life held no negatives, now there are natural disasters that challenge both the righteous and the evil. There are consequences to decisions, both ours and the decisions of others that reach into our lives. There are ups and downs, joys and sorrows over which none of us have complete control.

If God did build a hedge around every person who obeys Him, there would be negative results:

- * God would be required, continually, to work miracles to protect His children from the events taking place around them.

- * People, seeing that ease of life for Christians, would clamour to get in the “ark”, not because of sincere love of God but to ensure ease of life for themselves. This would amount to little more than bribery on God’s part. Even we don’t appreciate “bought” people. Why should God set up a system that would ensure such problems?

- * “But,” you say, “He knows hearts, so He could limit that outpouring of protection only to those who are sincere.” Oh, what problems would result from that! We, as humans, can’t know the hearts of others; when those who were not “hedged about” — yet seemed sincere — complained that God was failing to keep His promises, we could not know whether *they* were lying or *God* was to be blamed.

- * And then there is the problem that even sincere humans can be weak and falter. With degrees of commitment on our part, would God be required to reduce His “hedge” in proportion? And if, when our faith was

questioning and our commitment was weak, life became complicated with bad things happening, wouldn't that combination further weaken us? Could not the absence of the "hedge" we had believed secure lead ultimately to our total loss of faith in God?

* Lastly, as explored in chapter 8, just as we develop the muscles in our physical bodies through exercise — challenges that push us to our limit — our spiritual muscles grow in strength as we weather the storms of life while hanging onto the life-preserver of faith.

What Has God Promised?

God has made two promises concerning His help as we move through life:

The first promise is that, with God's help, we will be able to bear whatever comes into our lives, if we look for the "way of escape" so that we can do our part in remaining faithful to Him. 1 Corinthians 10:13 says: **"No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it."**

The second promise is that, regardless of the challenges and pain of life, ***if we remain faithful***, God will work things around so that we will be the ultimate benefactors from whatever we endure.

Romans 8:28: **"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose."**

God does not lie, and He never fails in keeping His promises. His power is unlimited and He can do whatever is necessary to keep those who have faithfully committed themselves to His care.

The World's Population Divided

Throughout time, humans have divided themselves into two groups: those who love God and are obedient to Him, and those who choose to go their own way in disobedience. During the "Patriarchal Age" we see Seth, Enoch, Methuselah, Noah, Abraham and many of his descendants in the first group. Others, such as Cain, Nimrod, the Amalekites, the Canaanites, and most of the population worshiped idols and became so wicked that God destroyed the world with a flood, and then separated the nations by confusing their language.

With the giving of the "Law of Moses", God focused on Abraham's descendants, the "children of Israel", as the ones through whom the Word would be born to be the Savior of the obedient. Even during this age, though, God heard the prayers and penitence of any non-Israelites who would turn to Him, as was the case with the people of Nineveh in response to the preaching of Jonah, (3:5-10): **"So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them.... Then God saw their works, that they**

turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it."

We live now under the "Law of Christ", envisioned by Elohim — The Lord God of Hosts, The Word, and The Holy Spirit — even before the creation began: [He was] **"...the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world"** (Revelation 13:8). Knowing that man would fall to temptation to disobey God's initial command to Adam and Eve, yet knowing also that many souls would love God and would want to please Him, the plan was made to cleanse the obedient in the sacrificial blood of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. According to Galatians 4:4,5, **"... when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons."**

The first division of the world's population occurred with the dispersion from the tower of Babel. This was a physical separation which resulted in races, nations, and tribes, speaking many different languages.

The second division of the world's population occurred with the proclamation of the Gospel, when those who responded to the message separated themselves from the world and were born through the waters of baptism into the spiritual Family of God.

What has God promised after death and the judgment, eternally, to those who remain in the world, rebellious, never having been washed in the blood of the Lamb? Revelation 21:8 explains clearly: **"But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."**

What has God promised after death and the judgment, eternally, to those who come to Him in obedience? **"Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.... And the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come.' And let him that heareth say, 'Come.' And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely"** (Revelation 22:14,17).

Questions

1. What are reasons for consequences that happen even in the lives of faithful Christians?
2. Does God protect His children from all problems and natural disasters?
3. If He did, what would be the negative results?
4. How do His children actually benefit from challenges?
5. What are two promises God has made to us, according to 1 Corinthians 10:13 and Romans 8:28?
6. God has promised a _____ of _____. Our responsibility is to be _____ for it!
7. Why did God destroy the world with the flood?
8. Why did He separate the people by confusing the languages at the Tower of Babel?
9. What does the story of Jonah and Ninevah teach us about God's desire to forgive?
10. At Babel, God separated the world into groups by introducing new languages. With the death of Christ and the beginning of His church, God now separates people through what means?

Our Awesome God

Chapter Thirteen

In these lessons we have studied many things from the inspired Scripture about our God. We have seen that, while He is of one essence, He is three persons: The Lord of Hosts, the Word [born as Jesus Christ, the Son of God], and the Holy Spirit. We have studied about His eternality, His love, and His power. We know that He is Spirit and cannot be *seen* by human eyes, but Romans 1:20 makes a bold statement: **“For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse...”**

Even to the eye, untrained in science, the wonders of creation make the overwhelming statement that an all-powerful, all-knowing Being had to be the entity Who created matter from nothing and then gave it all the shapes and colors and abilities and endless variations that we see everywhere we look. We can know that, initially, no matter existed, because scientists tell us that all matter is decaying. With time, it is obvious that everything gets old and falls apart — so “matter” is not *eternal*! Every form of matter that exists had to have a beginning, through the power of God!

The Scriptures tell us that God is eternal: He had no beginning and will have no end. He created the expanse of the universe.

To human eye, the universe may seem infinite; we cannot know if and where its outer expanses end. But in spite of human limitations, science has told us many things about the earth, space, our sun, the stars, even the entire universe. Their conclusions are based on an evolutionary mind-set, estimating the age of the universe to be 13.5 billion years, with no possibility that the Genesis account of creation ever be considered. Therefore, much of their thinking must be viewed with a big question mark, and even rejection. However...

Though simple visual observation would lead us to conclude that the earth itself is the center of the universe, scientists have figured and calculated — and they tell us, and these figures fluctuate wildly with the passing of time and the invention of new methods of measuring — that the earth is actually a miniscule planet in a huge galaxy of 200 billion stars, six trillion miles in diameter, called the Milky Way. They say that the sun which seems to rise and set is actually 93 million miles away, a huge burning mass of gases. And they

declare that our earth — a ball, 24,000 miles in circumference — circles the sun, spinning at the rate of 1000 miles an hour at the equator, hurling around in our orbit at 67,000 miles an hour, and is part of a galaxy which is flying through space at perhaps millions of miles an hour — yet we feel no movement at all! Wondrous Creator!!!

We look into the sky and with the naked eye we can see 2,000 to 4,000 stars. However, with the telescopes available to astronomers today — and with the ability to hear and measure sound waves — stars and galaxies at a distance of hundreds of millions of light years have been reported by scientists! Some have figured that the entire universe is at least 30 billion light years across! How can such distances even be conceived by the human mind?

Since the hugeness of God's created universe is obviously beyond human comprehension, we can turn our thoughts to the earth itself, to the millions of forms of life that encircle us every day: trees, herbs, flowers, fruit and vegetable plants. Everything around us lives and does the work it was designed to do, completely interwoven with the whole of creation.

While no man has ever yet been able to take “nothing” and turn it into “something”, he has not even been able to take “something” and give it life! Yet, from the smallest microbe to the Blue Whale, God has taken nothing, breathed life into it, and woven its existence and work into the fabric of everything else He has created!

Again, we are overwhelmed with the truth, **“For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse...”**

Attempting to be honest with myself concerning the existence of a God I cannot see, I have asked myself many questions. For the answers I try to place my mind in neutral territory, with no conclusion and no automatic clinging to faith in God.

Conclusion number one: I exist!

In that state, consciousness of self-existence is my first realization. I think, “Regardless of the logic and arguments and debates of scholars who think they know all the answers, the reality of my own existence has to be dealt with. I AM HERE. I EXIST! There's no getting around that fact.”

“So how did I get here? Could evolution possibly be the answer?” Did all matter come from non-matter? Did life develop from non-life? Everything in proved and observed science, and in our own human experience, denies that

either of these can happen. Humans make marvelous things with their genius, talent, labor, and endurance — *but not one of these things has come into existence without a maker, and no human has been able to give life to any single thing he made!* But if we admit that even the simplest, lifeless creation of man must have had a maker, then basic logic insists that the human body — the most complicated and marvelous “machine” in existence — also had to have a Creator. There is no way around the fact. My existence demands a Maker — Whoever He is and whatever name He wears.

Conclusion number two: I owe my existence to some outside Force

“So, I AM HERE. I WAS MADE BY SOMEONE.” These facts silence the haranguing of the evolutionists. I don’t have to know everything about their “doctrine” (and it IS a doctrine, a religion of atheism), and I don’t have to be able to answer all of their hypotheses, because the tenet itself does not hold water. My existence alone establishes the fact of my Maker.

Now, since I am here and *Someone* made me, “WHO WAS THAT SOMEONE?” It is known that humans — the most intelligent beings on earth — cannot create another human. **We cannot even make *anything* from *nothing*!** So the Someone who made us is greater than we are and, therefore, must not be of this world. This Being is beyond our grasp, and any knowledge we have of Him must come from His mind to ours — not from our own mind. Therefore, we have no choice but to look to spiritual revelation for our answer.

Humans throughout the ages have worshiped. Truly, there is a “God-sized” hole in every soul, and it can only be filled with “God”. Yes, humans have often forgotten the one true God, and they have created and worshiped “gods” of all kinds. We have many writings that tell of these “gods” and of what they require of humans. We can read the “scriptures” of Hinduism, Sikhism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism, Islam, and writings concerning some of the modern-day religions, but if we are honest in our evaluation we will see that these writings are filled with myth and error.

The one book that has stood the test of time and of every kind of challenge is called “The Bible”. It has been preserved in spite of the efforts of unbelievers to destroy it. It has been translated into more languages than any other book, more copies of it have been printed and distributed throughout the world than of any other book, and every year it is the “best seller” in the whole world. Unlike other writings of centuries ago, the message of the Bible is as relevant today as in the years in which it was written, because its message is not the words of its writers but is the words of God as He gave them to the prophets and Apostles.

When I read the Bible, year after year, I am continually learning points

I had never noticed or understood before. This could never be said of any writings of a human! The ultimate conclusion from a study of God's message to us in the written word, from God's message to us in the majesty of His created universe, from our study of our own selves — and finally from the realization that He loved us so much that He gave His own Son so that our sins can be forgiven and we can live with Him eternally — has to be total surrender and worship:

“...the Lord is in His holy temple. Let all the earth keep silence before Him” Habakkuk 2:20.